THE METHOD OF THE DISCUSSION GROUP

LAURA F. BOYER

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THE METHOD OF THE DISCUSSION GROUP

by

LAURA F. BOYER

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."—II Timothy 2:15

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PREFACE

SINCE the value of the discussion method for teaching adults is increasingly recognized in the Church, there is a great demand for a short and yet comprehensive treatment of the subject which can be used as a basis for normal classes, or can be put into the hands of leaders for private study. I have felt the lack of such a volume myself, when, at the close of many normal classes, I have been asked, "Isn't this method written out somewhere?" and I have not been able to recommend a single volume which both outlined the technique, and applied it to teaching in the Church. Some books have been too condensed to be more than suggestive in regard to the method; others so long and complicated as to be difficult for the average leader to read because of the bewildering mass of detail. Anyone can learn to lead discussion groups provided he masters the basic principles of the method and puts them into practice. In this volume, I have tried to present these principles and to suggest the way in which they may be used in discussion groups in the Church.

I have taken as a basis for the text, notes which I have been using for the past three years in normal classes and at summer conferences during which time they have been under constant revision. The results from these classes, in the development of leaders for parish groups, diocesan institutes, and summer conferences, make me hopeful that the same treatment

of the subject will be useful to others who are leading similar classes, or to parish leaders who are not able to avail themselves of courses offered at summer conferences.

Throughout this volume, I have used freely quotations, illustrations, and suggestive ideas from *The Method of the Recitation* and *Handbook of Practice for Teachers*, by Charles A. and Frank M. McMurry, both of which textbooks I heartily recommend for careful study.

LAURA F. BOYER.

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May, 1924.

CHAPTER I

THE DISCUSSION METHOD

EVEN a superficial study of the Gospels will show that a large part of our Lord's earthly life was spent in teaching. The visible results of that teaching compel multitudes of people, even those who are not His personal followers, to say with Nicodemus: "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God." The method of teaching which He used to accomplish His great purpose of building in this world the Kingdom of God is worth the earnest study of all who would follow Him as teachers. Consider our Lord's interview with Nicodemus (St. John 3:1-21) in which He taught the necessity for spiritual rebirth with the immediate aim of changing the character of His pupil. The method He used was question and answer with a perfect illustration of the working of the Spirit (St. John 3:8). The question of the tribute money (St. Matthew 22:15-22); the conversation leading up to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (St. Luke 10:25-37); the interview with the woman of Samaria (St. John 4:4-26), and many other incidents in His earthly life will repay careful analysis, from the point of view of *how* He taught as well as from the point of view of *what* He taught.

The same method of teaching is recommended today by our foremost educators. The purpose of this book is to explain the principles of this method so

that leaders in the Church may be prepared to use it in their classes.

The method is here called the discussion method although it is known by various names in the world of secular education. According to its rules suggestive questions are given to the group for study and thought, sometimes with collateral reading assigned and sometimes without. Free discussion of these questions is encouraged by the leader with a view to reaching some general truth which shall lead the members of the group to action. The method is in absolute opposition to didactic teaching by which a teacher attempts to force scholars to accept his opinions on certain subjects as the final ones, and to the method of teaching which uses verbatim memorizing as the means of imparting knowledge. Even though questions may be asked, in connection with both of these methods, to test the memory, this fact does not create a similarity. Questioning is used in the discussion method, not to discover how much is remembered, but to collect facts, to present them to the members of the group for consideration and comparison with other facts until the general truths which form the basis for all real knowledge are reached. This does not mean that no facts are to be learned in a discussion group, but rather that such facts are regarded as simply the foundation of knowledge and not as knowledge itself. The knowledge of facts is of little value in producing action unless their significance is understood. This presentation of material for thought is only the first step in teaching. In the discussion method, therefore, any textbook on a course that may be chosen is used to provide a basis for discussion, rather than as a

volume whose pages are to be gone over one by one with memory tests at various intervals.

> "But if instruction simply presented the facts and then ceased, it would be like the architect stopping when his foundation walls were finished, or the manufacturer ceasing work as soon as the wool was collected out of which cloth might be made. Such work by itself is useless; it must be followed by something more. So in education, percepts (individual notions) are not in and by themselves of vital importance to human beings; their worth consists not in themselves but in what they lead to or suggest beyond themselves." (McMurry—*The Method of the Recitation.*)

Aims of the Discussion Method

The discussion method aims:

1. To stimulate thought through the consideration of certain facts.
2. To lead to a conviction by the expression and comparison of various ideas about these facts.
3. To produce activity, mental or physical, as a result of that conviction.

1. *The Stimulation of Thought.* The emphasis in the discussion method is on the development of the power to think and not on the cultivation of the memory. That certain facts can be repeated verbatim does not necessarily mean that knowledge has been acquired, but simply that the student has a good memory. Only when the significance of the facts is so thoroughly understood that the mind reaches the same general truth spontaneously when confronted by the same facts in another connection, can knowledge be said to be really acquired.

Many facts without an understanding of their significance are too trivial to remember. For instance, suppose one knew the name of Robert Morrison, of what value is that knowledge? But suppose that

with this name one was led to associate the idea of God's call to service for the world through His Church, then the name of Robert Morrison has real significance.

Or suppose that one knew just how many mission stations there are in our China mission. Of what value is that unless one understands the significance to China of their establishment and work?

McMurry in his *Method of the Recitation* uses the illustration of Newton and the discovery of the law of gravitation to explain this point. He says:

> "Probably apples have been dropping from trees ever since Adam and Eve tasted of the forbidden fruit; but such little events have elicited no special interest until they gave hints to a philosopher of the wonderful law of gravitation. Their value therefore consists not in themselves but in what they suggest. The same is true of Franklin's experiment with the kite and electricity. It would be ridiculous to preserve all the details of that incident if there were no universal truth involved in it—but since it led to the discovery of another great law, it is justly famous."

2. *The Development of Conviction.* In the discussion method, the leader aims to develop by discussion the significance of facts and so reach general rules governing action. The method is in harmony with the trend of modern education which is laying more and more emphasis on the development of the power to think. A few illustrations from the modern method of teaching general school subjects may serve to make clear the power of the discussion method in the development of conviction.

Take, for instance, the teaching of geography. Under the old system, conditions in each country were given in separate paragraphs with a heading

of the name of the country in heavy type and below it in light type, listed under their respective headings, the principal cities, principal rivers, principal products, etc. All of these lists were learned by heart and recited verbatim by the scholar. The method of teaching geography today differs from this in that the facts to be learned are centered around and gain significance from a central idea. The teacher may tell the class to open their geographies and with the map before them take a trip from London to Bombay, naming the cities at which they stop and telling what products are loaded and unloaded on their boat. It will be clear that the facts about the cities, their location and products which were formerly taught by rote, will be learned and that there will also be an opportunity to understand these facts in their relation to latitude and longitude, climate, races of people, etc.

In an older class, the assets of countries commercially and industrially are learned by the discussion of some such question as this: "Which do you think the more valuable to the United States, Alaska or the Panama Canal Zone?"—which is given in advance to pupils for study and thought and discussed when the class meets—or this: "How does the price of the Danish West Indies compare with the value of these islands to the United States?" Facts in regard to these countries must be learned in order to answer such questions. These facts necessarily include the principal cities, principal products, etc., but their significance to national life is definitely developed in the class by the discussion led by the teacher. In future years, if some of these same children should be United States Senators, they would be in a posi-

tion to form sound judgments in regard to the value of the purchase of other countries should such matters be under consideration. A mere repetition of lists of cities, rivers, and products does not necessarily awaken any thought on the subject or relate the countries studied in any way to national or international affairs.

History is taught by the same method. At Groton, one of our leading boys' schools, the scholars of a certain grade have no history textbook. Questions are assigned to be looked up and the boys use the reference books available in the library, prepare the argument relating to the question assigned, and present it to the class. The whole matter is then discussed in class and conclusions reached.

How much more stimulating to mental life to trace the results of the Napoleonic age in Europe than to learn a list of battles of this period with their respective location and dates! How much more mental development is secured from a study of the Civil War in the light of the doctrine of States Rights than to learn a list of the names of the chief military leaders of that period! Education should be a training for life, not a process of cramming the brain with unrelated facts.

This should be as true of education in the Church as it is of education in schools. How much more stimulating to consider the purpose of foreign missions than to learn by heart the names of our foreign missionaries, and how much more likely to develop convictions in regard to our mission to non-Christian nations! The discussion of such a question as: "What is the relation between foreign missions and peace?"—will bring out more reasons for supporting

missions than could possibly be developed by learning the number of schools we have in China and the dates of their foundation. A real understanding of the jail system in regard to the theory of jails and their present administration in our country is far more apt to produce intelligent reform than a mere speech on conditions in American jails. The application of the teaching of the parables to modern conditions is of more value than their recitation from memory.

The presentation of facts is not all that is necessary to create Christian conviction. Those facts must be given significance in the mind by their relation to other facts, and out of this comparison must grow a realization of some general truth before they can be expressed in activity. To the serious minded, this is often done by their own mental processes in silence, but it is greatly aided by discussion in a group. Here the contributions of more than one mind can be brought to bear on a question. Together, these minds may compare the various contributions, eliminate the non-essential and the false, and reach a conclusion which is a real conviction.

3. *The Production of Activity.* The comparison of individual notions such as discussion makes possible, and the subsequent formation of general truths is the natural method of reaching the ideas that govern action. A child learns instinctively by question and answer, constant experiment, and investigation. He will not stay away from the open fire because his mother tells him it is hot and will burn him, but edges nearer and nearer, or stretches out his hand until he forms a conviction on the subject himself. That the youth of every age refuse to profit by the experience of their elders is a subject of gen-

eral interest and discussion. Primitive man gained his knowledge by continuous classification of the facts he discovered. The human mind does not learn by means of isolated facts, but by means of a conviction of the significance of these facts. Facts produce activity only when they gain a real significance in the mind.

The discussion method has been tested by actual practice in the worlds of religious and of secular education, and has been found to be the best method of developing activity based on conviction. All education in the Church aims to develop action based on Christian conviction. Hence the leaders of the educational work in the Church recommend this method for use in parishes.

The Parish Discussion Group

The parish discussion group should be composed of not more than twenty-five people. They may be men and women, or all men or all women. The discussion group is especially recommended for young people. If there are more than twenty-five desiring to join in discussion, other groups should be formed. The presence of too large a number of people in one group will prevent the free discussion which is so necessary to its success.

A leader for each group should be prepared to guide the discussion much as the chairman of a meeting brings questions before a group of people gathered for the conduct of business. If the group can sit around a table or at least in a circle or semicircle rather than in rows, a greater atmosphere of informality will be developed which will also aid in the creation of free discussion.

The members of a discussion group must be prepared to read the textbook, if one is used; to give serious thought to the questions assigned by the leader; or to make such investigation of facts as may be found necessary to aid in reaching sound conclusions. They should have pads and pencils. They must also be willing to make sacrifices to attend *every* meeting of the group so that the subject in hand may be fully developed. A member who misses one of a series of discussion meetings, loses the thread of the argument and may have no basis for conviction.

In addition to the leader, there should be a chairman or promoter who advertises the class and secures its membership. This same promoter may be the secretary who keeps a record of the attendance, distributes the textbooks, and relieves the leader of many minor details.

The group should meet at regular intervals for a series of discussions which should be centered around one general subject either with or without a textbook. The method is described in detail in the succeeding pages.

Both the leader and the members should realize that a group for discussion of matters relating to the Church is a serious affair deserving careful study and prayerful thought, so that it may inspire all to world-wide service for the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER II

THE COURSE AS A WHOLE

IN PREPARING a course for teaching by the discussion method, there are five main considerations.

1. *The Subject of the Course.* The leader must select a subject for the course. In doing this, both the interests and the general ability of the group must be considered. The selection of the subject is equally important whether a textbook is to be used or not. If a textbook is to be used, the leader should look over those available and decide which one will be most valuable for the particular course in question. Very often the subject for the course will be the subject of the textbook as in the following examples:

Textbook: *Wanted—Leaders*—Bratton.
Subject of the Course: The Destiny of the Negro Race.
Textbook: *Creative Forces in Japan*—Fisher.
Subject of the Course: Christ and the Japanese.

However, other subjects besides the subject of the textbook are possible, as for instance:

Textbook: *Wanted—Leaders*—Bratton.
Subject of the Course: The Negro and America's Future.
Textbook: *Creative Forces in Japan*—Fisher.
Subject of the Course: Japan and Leadership.

There are times when it is better for the leader to choose a subject regardless of the subject of the textbook, as in the following examples:

Textbook: *Our Church and Our Country*—Burleson.
Subject of the Course: Christian Patriotism.
Textbook. *The General Church Program.* (Budget and Priorities.)
Subject of the Course: The World as a Neighborhood.

In preparing a course, the selection of a good subject is of primary importance as what follows is simply the development of the subject chosen. The first thing for the leader to do, therefore, is to decide on his subject.

2. *The Aim of the Course.* The next step in preparing a course is to plan what the leader is going to prove about the subject. This he does by a series of arguments which he directs. These must be held together by one main idea. This idea should be suggested in the first session of the course and developed through the succeeding sessions, so that definite conclusions may be formed concerning it by the time the final session is reached.

> "The mastery of the general truths of a subject must remain the direct purpose of instruction in every branch of knowledge. They are the centres around which the knowledge of any subject is grouped and classified." (McMurry—*The Method of the Recitation.*)

The second step in the preparation of a course is therefore to decide on this idea around which all the facts presented in the textbook, or gained from experience and reading in case no textbook is used, are to be centered, and from which they are to gain sig-

nificance. The material presented by any textbook, however abundant, must be presented as a unit. All the facts used in the course must be selected or rejected according to their contribution to the unity of the whole. The necessity for such a guiding thought is evident when one remembers that the purpose of the discussion method is to stimulate thought and not to store the memory with facts. The significance of the facts is therefore of primary importance, and not the facts themselves. This selection of a main idea around which to mold the course will serve to:

1. Stimulate thought along a definite line.
2. Prevent wandering and unprofitable discussion.
3. Aid in the logical progression of thought.
4. Establish a complete line of reasoning on which conviction may be based.
5. Stimulate activity based on intelligent conviction.

The main idea which is to give all the facts presented in the course significance should be expressed as an aim, and should represent the most valuable thought which in the leader's opinion can be developed from that course.

Some examples of aims may explain their formation:

Aim for a course on *The General Church Program*—
"To show that God and man are co-workers in making the world His Kingdom."

Aim for the course on *Creative Forces in Japan*—
"To show the relation of Christ to the lives of the Japanese people."

Aim for the course on *Our Church and Our Country*—
"To realize how the Church may make our nation fit to do its part in the establishment of a world-wide Christian democracy."

Aim for the course on *Christian Stewardship*—
"To show that the Christian holds himself and his

material possessions in trust to be used for God, his Master."

Aim for the course on *Alaskan Missions of the Episcopal Church*—

"To catch such a vision of the work of the Church in Alaska that we may give it our intelligent and loyal support."

Aim for the course on *The Social Opportunity of the Churchman*—

"To realize that every Christian is responsible for the application of the principles of Christ's Kingdom in his community."

The leader will note from these examples that in no case is there a plan to teach the textbook page by page until every fact in it is noted, but that the facts are grouped in their relation to the Kingdom of God, the central teaching of our Lord. That each aim suggests activity in connection with this conviction is also to be noted.

A Bible passage which embodies the thought of the aim should be chosen with great care in order that the thought of the leader and of the group may be constantly directed to the fundamental teachings of Christianity. This Bible passage may be a verse or a collection of verses, a parable, or a chapter or part of a chapter.

An appropriate Bible passage for a course on the *General Church Program* is Philippians 2:1-16.

For a course on *Creative Forces in Japan*—St. John 12:32; St. Matthew 12:25-30, and St. Matthew 5:17.

In order to find an aim for the course, the leader, having read through the textbook, may select the author's aim in writing the book. This will insure the

helpful relation of the aim to the course. In case the author's aim seems obscure, or the subject chosen differs from that of the author, then the leader should choose an aim to develop the most worthwhile idea presented by that book. In case no textbook is used, the aim for the course should be chosen in relation to the development of the subject.

The aim should be expressed clearly and in as few words as possible.

Aims must be:

1. Concrete, not abstract.
2. Definite.
3. Short, simple and attractive.

3. *The Division of the Course into Sessions.* Having decided on the aim, the leader should next decide on the steps by which that aim can be reached. The discussion method deals with ideas, not with words. Emphatic ideas should be found and made the subjects for the various sessions of the course.

The arrangement of the material is governed largely by the number of sessions or meetings to be held. This number is determined by the character of the group. In some places, six or seven sessions may be possible; in others, the group cannot be expected to meet together more than three or four times. The leader should plan the length of the course according to the ability of the group to attend. A short course with a good attendance is better than a long course with a shifting or dwindling group, although a longer course makes possible a more thorough development of the subject. Each session should be at least an hour and a quarter long.

Having decided how many sessions are to be held on any given course, the leader must reread the textbook with the aim in mind and decide what ideas deserve distinction. Then, the material in the textbook must be divided in such a way that each session will contribute its part to the development of the idea embodied in the aim.

As an illustration, take the course on Japan. Having decided on the subject and the aim for the course, the leader should consider what facts must be known in order to develop that aim. If one is to consider the relation of Christ to the lives of the Japanese people, one must necessarily know about the Japanese people, their characteristics, their status of development, their social and industrial problems, and their religions. The relation of Christ to each part of their lives must be considered with a view to the final discussion of His relation to their lives as a whole.

The course is therefore divided in the following way:

Session 1. Introductory.
Session 2. The Japanese people.
Session 3. Their present status of development.
Session 4. Their industrial situation.
Session 5. Their religious situation.
Session 6. Christ as the solution to the problem.

The division of a course on the General Church Program may serve as a further illustration. The aim being "to show that God and man are co-workers in making the world His Kingdom," emphatic ideas might be the types of work in which the Church is now engaged in accomplishing this purpose, and the course divided thus:

Session 1. Religious Education.
Session 2. Christian Social Service.
Session 3. Missions.
Session 4. The Kingdom in its relation to these types of work.

Or the emphatic ideas might be the fields in which the Church is working, and the course divided thus:

Session 1. Introductory.
Session 2. The Foreign Field.
Session 3. The Latin-American Field.
Session 4. The Domestic Field.
Session 5. The World Kingdom.

In every case, all the emphatic ideas necessary to develop the aim must be included in the course. A short course must reach the aim no less than a long one. Details may be omitted but not emphatic ideas. For example, in the course on Japan, certain main ideas must be considered if the aim is to be reached. The leader cannot drop the consideration of any of them, and yet reach the aim. Therefore, if this course is to be given in less than six sessions, it must be combined in such a way as to include these main ideas. It might be condensed thus:

Session 1. The Japanese people and their present status of development.
Session 2. Their industrial situation.
Session 3. Their religious situation.
Session 4. Christ as the solution of their problems.

The course on the Program might be condensed as follows:

Session 1. The path of the Church: Religious Education, Christian Social Service, and Missions.
Session 2. The Goal—the Kingdom.

On the other hand it might be expanded to include:

Session 1. Introductory—The need of the world.
Session 2. Needs in Japan.
Session 3. Needs in China.
Session 4. Needs in the Philippine Islands.
Session 5. Needs in the Hawaiian Islands.
Session 6. Needs in Latin America.
Session 7. Needs in Liberia.
Session 8. Needs among the Negroes in the United States.
Session 9. Needs among the Indians.
Session 10. Needs among the Mountaineers of the South.
Session 11. The rural problem.
Session 12. Needs among the foreign-born Americans.
Session 13. The World Kingdom of our Lord.

In both cases, the emphatic ideas are retained in emphatic positions, and the aim will be reached.

In planning a course, emphatic ideas must occupy positions of distinction by becoming the special subjects for discussion during the sessions of the course.

4. *The Aim of the Individual Session.* In addition to the proper division of subject matter into sessions, there must be logical progression of thought throughout the course if the aim is to be reached. Each session must be built on the last until there is a logical structure leading to conviction at the end. Having decided on the subject and the aim for the course, and divided the material according to the number of sessions to be held so that emphatic ideas occupy important positions the leader must select an aim for each session which shall give such a significance to these emphatic ideas that each one of them can make its contribution to the accomplishment of the main aim.

This necessitates the preparation of the entire course before the first session is held. The necessary progression of thought is endangered by any leader who prepares each session separately keeping just one session ahead of the group. The course must be carefully planned so that there shall be logical progression of thought throughout, with a definite conclusion at the end. Unless the leader has a conception of the whole at the beginning of the course, there is little chance of securing unity.

For example, take the course on Japan. With the main aim, the emphatic ideas chosen as special subjects for discussion during separate sessions, and an aim for each session, the course stands as follows:

Subject for Course: Christ and the Japanese.
Aim for Course: To show the relation of Christ to the lives of the Japanese people.

Session 1. Subject: The Japanese Problem.
Aim: To present the Japanese Problem.

Session 2. Subject: The People of Japan.
Aim: To present the people of Japan.

Session 3. Subject: Liberalism and Reaction in Japan.
Aim: To present their present status of development.

Session 4. Subject: Japan's Industrial Life.
Aim: To present their industrial situation.

Session 5. Subject: The Religions of the Japanese.
Aim: To present their religious situation.

Session 6. Subject: Christian Missions in Japan.
Aim: To show that Christ is the solution to the problem.

The aim for the last session relates to the solution of the problem which is suggested in the first session and which is discussed in detail through the intermediate sessions. Every course must have an introduction, a development, and a conclusion.

Aims for separate sessions may be expressed as aims or problems or statements or resolutions. The form in which they are expressed does not alter their value. In case a problem-question is used, the aim is reached when that question is answered. Thus, the aim for Session 1 might be expressed equally well as an aim thus: To present the Japanese problem; or as a problem-question, thus: What constitutes the real Yellow Peril? When the question is answered, the Japanese problem is presented. The same idea might be expressed equally well as a resolution, thus: Resolved: That the real Yellow Peril is contained in the fact that Japan is a non-Christian nation.

Great care should be exercised in finding these aims for separate sessions. In case a textbook is used, the chapter headings very often indicate them; but this is not always true. Moreover, two or three chapters are often combined to form the discussion for one session, thus making it impossible to use chapter headings. When no textbook is used, aims must necessarily be original. A poor aim precludes the possibility of a valuable discussion leading to a conclusion. The following suggestions may help in the selection of aims:

1. Select an aim broad enough to include several points of view, as, for instance: To understand what kind of education will most effectively promote the welfare of the Negro race.

2. Avoid an aim so narrow that it points only to one possible conclusion, as, for instance: To show that education under the Church promotes the welfare of the Negro race.
3. If the aim is expressed as a question, it should be in the form of a problem. For instance the aim under 1 may be expressed as a question thus: What kind of education will most effectively promote the welfare of the Negro race?
4. Avoid, as a problem, a question which may be answered by a statement of fact, as for instance: What are our outstanding educational institutions for Negroes? This type of question belongs properly to the development of the discussion and therefore cannot be used as the problem for a whole session.
5. Select a problem interesting to the group. Study the interests of the group in selecting a problem: age, individual interests, pursuits, etc.
6. Select problems that are worth discussing. Problems in connection with vital topics of the day are more valuable than purely academic questions.
7. Select a problem which represents a phase of the subject which can be covered in the time allotted for discussion.

5. *The Arrangement of Individual Sessions.* The fifth point to be kept in mind while building a course is that the relation of the parts of the course to each other must be unmistakable. The progression of thought must be so clear that there is no question of doubt in regard to the contribution of any one session to the whole. In order to hold the interest of the group, the ideas in the development of the course must be arranged in a clear and effective order in accordance with the natural sequence of thought. There is an order which, if found, gives each session its correct place and the only place it can hold without injury to the whole.

A well arranged course works towards a climax. In the course on Japan the climax is contained in the conclusion of Session 5 that the native religions cannot give the Japanese the way to eternal life. All the preceding discussion leads up to this climax; all that follows leads from it to a definite conclusion—that Christ is the solution to the Japanese problem. A climax has value because it prevents mental fatigue and because it supplies a means of measuring the final assertion.

Too much attention can hardly be paid to the transitions from session to session of a well planned course. The thought of each session must clearly be a development of the thought of those preceding it, and must clearly lead to the thought of the session following it. "A master-hand begins and ends each lesson so as to make it grow out of the last and into the next. He moves the course along so easily and naturally that the class members follow without being aware of the steps they are taking."

General Principles of Course Building

In the planning of courses, there are three general principles to be observed: Unity, Clearness, and Ease.

Sins against Unity are usually the result of confusion of thought. The leader cannot change his point of view in the middle of the course, nor can he change either the order of the sessions or their arrangement if unity is to be secured.

Sins against Clearness usually occur because important facts have not been placed in important places, or because a weak opening session has left the group vague about the subject to be discussed in

subsequent meetings, or because a weak ending has left the group in obscurity without having formed any conclusions, or because digressions have been permitted to lead the group away from the subject under discussion.

Ease is injured by a failure to mark transitions from one session to another; by a false emphasis which puts unimportant facts in important places; by an unnatural order which disturbs the average mind; by a careless start, without the attention of the group, who then do not follow the development of the course; or by poor endings which scatter the thought rather than direct it to a definite conclusion related to the following session.

A study of the general directions for the planning of a course outlined in this chapter will show the leader that the rules for planning the course are the same as those for planning any piece of English composition. The strength of the discussion method lies in its being governed by accepted psychological and pedagogical principles.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL SESSION

FOLLOWING the general rules and principles governing the plan for a course, there must be a more detailed understanding of the plan for separate sessions. The preparation of the lesson outline is the next consideration.

The Purpose of the Lesson Outline

The importance of the aim of each separate session has already been indicated. The purpose of the lesson outline is to plan to reach this aim, or to answer the problem-question.

Since the purpose of the teaching of adult groups in the Church is that they may arrive at a knowledge of the general truths underlying the Church's doctrine, organization, policies, and work, and apply these truths to the activities of their daily lives, the method best employed in the preparation of a lesson outline is based on the natural processes of the mind in reaching general truths on any subject.

How the Mind Reaches General Truths

A study of the method by which a child learns is illuminating. He acquires knowledge by constant experiment, not by becoming a passive receptacle into which information may be poured. He constantly classifies what individual notions he receives by experiment until he reaches general truths such as "fire

is hot," "candy is good to eat," etc. These general truths become the guide for his activity, so that his mother can safely say—"He will not go near the fire, he knows now that it is hot," or "Keep the candy away from him, he has learned that it is good to eat." The same method is employed today in scientific experiment by means of which general truths are reached. The telegraph, the telephone, the sewing machine, and many articles in common use are the results of the application of general truths which have been learned through years of experiment with constant classification of individual ideas. In acquiring knowledge, therefore, the natural process is to proceed from isolated facts to general truths, from the individual to the general, the known to the unknown, the concrete to the abstract.

The Arrangement of the Lesson Outline

In the preparation of a lesson outline there is then to be considered in the following order these three divisions:

1. Concrete facts.
2. General truths.
3. The application of general truths.

The lesson outline is formed in order to lead a group progressively from the first to the second, and from the second to the third; that is, a good lesson outline is formed according to the law of induction which is the natural method by which knowledge is acquired. That these steps should proceed in the above order is absolutely necessary if conviction is to be secured. Knowledge is not acquired when facts can be repeated from memory, but only when the general truth in re-

gard to those facts is understood. "Individual or concrete facts are the raw material out of which important thoughts are produced." (McMurry—*Method of the Recitation.*)

The most effective method by which to progress from one of these steps to the next may best be learned by analyzing the natural process of the human mind in meeting the problems with which it is constantly confronted such as these—"How can I reduce my expenses?" "Where shall I spend my vacation this year?" "What shall I do with Mary while I go to the movies?"

Steps in the Natural Thought Process

On careful analysis, it is evident that the processes of the human mind follow certain general lines.

First, there is an introduction which makes the problem real. For example, a notice comes from the bank that my account is overdrawn, and my aim at once becomes to learn how I can reduce my expenses. When I have answered this question I have solved my problem which has now become very real: What can I do to reduce my expenses this year?

Second, the problem having become real, it is presented to the mind thus: I must reduce my expenses in some way—I might do it by cutting down on food or clothes.

Third, the mind then gathers and compares data about this problem thus: If I cut down on food, I am likely to be sick. I am eating just about as little, as I can now, etc. If I buy fewer clothes, I shall be shabby; but it is better, of course, to be shabby than sick, etc.

Fourth, one arrives naturally at a general statement—I cannot buy that suit I was hoping to get this spring.

Fifth, in order to insure action, this conclusion is applied and the money which had been set aside to buy a suit is deposited in the bank. That this is a natural thought process, not forced in any way, is obvious.

There are certain main divisions of the ordinary process of thought in reaching general truths from concrete facts. Herbart calls these steps:

1. Preparation.
2. Presentation.
3. Comparison.
4. Generalization.
5. Application.

They may be studied in further detail in the two following examples:

I. Illustrative Thought Process

Problem: Where shall I spend my summer vacation this year?

Preparation: I have worked very hard this winter and am tired out. I must go somewhere for my vacation or my work will suffer next fall. (Preparation must include a statement of the problem.)

Presentation: Last summer I went to the mountains, this summer I might go to the seashore. (Presentation must state a discussable problem.)

Comparison: If I go to a resort in the mountains, there will be no change of air because I live in the mountains all the year round.

In most mountain resorts, there is nothing to do unless you have an automobile.

The last time I went to the mountains, I returned almost as tired as I went.

I haven't been to the seashore for several years.

If I go to the seashore, I shall have a complete change of air.

If I go to Atlantic City there is a lot to do; boardwalk, surf-bathing, auctions, etc. The seashore always does me good.

Generalization: Atlantic City is the best place to spend my vacation.

Application: I engage my rooms in an Atlantic City hotel. (Application must suggest action—mental or physical.)

II. Illustrative Thought Process

Problem: What shall I do with Mary this afternoon while I go to the movies?

Preparation: I have been in the house ever since Bennie had the measles. Mrs. Brown has asked me to go to the movies and I am crazy to go, but what shall I do with Mary?

Presentation: Some arrangements must be made for her or she will get into mischief. I could leave her at home with Bennie's nurse, or I could send her to Mrs. Smith's to play with Susie.

Comparison: If I leave her at home, she will tease Bennie and get him all upset.

The nurse can not manage both her and Bennie since he still needs a good deal of attention.

If I send her to Mrs. Smith's she and Susie can amuse each other.

They play together very nicely.

The last time I sent her to play with Susie, she was as good as gold when she came home.

Generalization: I will send her to play with Susie.

Application: "Mary, put on your coat and hat. I am going to let you play with Susie Smith this afternoon while I go to the movies with Mrs. Brown."

These steps in the natural thought process were applied to teaching by Herbart and his school, and, having been used for years in the schools of many countries, have stood the test of time and criticism.

Recently Professor Dewey proposed the correlation of ideas in relation to activities, and the steps in the natural thought process were consequently renamed in the following way:

Dewey	Herbart
1. An activity interrupted raising a query or problem.	Preparation Presentation
2. The definition of the problem.	Comparison
3. The solution of the problem.	Generalization
4. The resumed activity.	Application

In *How We Think* by Professor Dewey, these steps in the natural thought process are described thus:

Dewey	Herbart
1. A felt difficulty.	Preparation
2. Its location and definition.	Presentation
3. Suggestion of possible solutions.	Comparison
4. Development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestions.	Generalization
5. Further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection.	Application

How to Plan a Lesson Outline

Without going more deeply into the psychological background, it is clear that since the most effective lesson outline is the one that follows the laws of natural mental processes, the material for any lesson may best be arranged according to these progressive steps in the natural process of human thought.

1. *Preparation.* That the preparatory step in leading discussions, although frequently neglected, is a very important one, will be easily realized when one considers that the mind of each member of an adult group is filled with preconceived notions which must

be carefully considered by any leader who wishes to make a permanent impression. According to the knowledge which is already in his mind, each individual will interpret any new material that may be presented. The force of the contents of the mind in its bearing on the presentation of new material may be illustrated by the impression a painting of the rapids of the Niagara River made on different individuals in the same group. An artist, noticing the beauty of the lights and shadows, reaches the general truth that the Niagara River is a fine subject for study. A mill-owner, thinking of the possibilities of the water-power, decides that Niagara Falls would be a good place to build his new factory. A professional swimmer, recalling the unsuccessful attempts that have been made to swim these rapids, decides that such risks are too dangerous to take. A traveler, remembering the incidents of his last visit to Niagara Falls, makes up his mind that it would be worth another visit. Ready-made conclusions cannot be handed from one individual to another, because each person forms his own conclusions on the basis of the knowledge which is already in his mind. This is done by children and adults alike, perfectly naturally and without effort. Good teaching, therefore, consists in building new ideas and feelings on the foundation of those already in the minds of the group. When this has been done effectively, and only then, is a new idea really acquired.

The first step in any lesson outline must, therefore, be introductory or preparatory in order that the way may be found for presenting the new idea so as to connect it closely with the old ideas already in the mind.

McMurry in his *Method of the Recitation*, calls attention to the dangers of neglecting this preparatory step. He says that without proper preparation:

1. There may be no understanding of the subject presented on the part of the audience. Occasionally the criticism is made of lecturers that they "talk over the heads" of the audience. This result is caused by the fact that the preparatory step has been neglected.
2. The subject, even if understood, may arouse no interest. Many an address on missions has failed to fill the audience with missionary spirit.
3. The subject may be partially understood or misunderstood. Every public speaker knows the danger of being misquoted. It is not uncommon for two people to go to the same lecture and contradict each other flatly about what has been said.

The preparatory step need not be labored, but may be concerned with experiences, occupations, subjects of conversations, extracts from books, noteworthy events, or with a review of the previous session. At the end of the preparatory step, the aim of the session must be stated or suggested so that the subject to be discussed is clearly before the minds of the group. From the point of view of the course, the whole first session is preparatory, putting before the group the subject and suggesting the line of discussion to be followed through the course.

The introduction of the first session is particularly important as interest must be gained at the start. If sound conclusions are to be reached at the end of the course, the minds of the group must follow its development from start to finish. It may be necessary for a leader to plan a different preparatory step

for this session for each group he leads, unless there is something peculiarly interesting, or close to all people such as the earthquake in Japan or the Great War. In particular cases, parish or community conditions may form the basis for the preparatory step. In any case, the preparation question of the first session should be thought-arresting.

In any but the first session, the preparatory step should be in the form of a review of the previous session. The leader may either make a statement of the conclusions reached in the previous session, ask a member of the group to read a summary of them, ask a few questions which bring out previous conclusions, re-read the Bible passage with which the previous session was closed, or read a pertinent clipping. In any case, the review should be short and to the point, and should not be allowed to occupy the time needed for the discussion of the new subject.

Sufficient explanation has been given to show the leader that much time should be spent on the preparation of the preparatory step for both the course and the separate session. Neglect of this has wrecked many a course.

The reader may find it interesting at this point to study the Introductory Sessions in the courses on *Creative Forces in Japan*, and *China's Real Revolution*, as published in the *Suggestions for Leaders* for these courses. These may be obtained at The Book Store, Church Missions House, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York City, for 25 cents each.

2. *Presentation.* In the presentation step, individual facts are presented which, in the next step, are to be compared. This is the place in the session where data for discussion are collected.

Data for presentation and comparison should be gathered from experience, from the textbook, from general reading—newspapers and magazines, secular as well as religious. The group should be urged to read and collect clippings and to make investigations.

As these facts form the basis for discussion, they must be correct. The leader must see that all false statements are corrected before the group proceeds to comparison. No sound conclusion can be reached on a basis of incorrect facts.

The leader may manage the presentation step by asking a question which calls for an answer furnishing a number of facts. The following illustrations are taken from different sessions of the course on Japan:

1. "What is the attitude of the average American towards Japan?"
2. "What are the traditional characteristics of the Japanese people?"
3. "How would you describe Japan's present industrial conditions?"
4. "Describe the chief religions of Japan."

3. *Comparison.* When a sufficient number of facts have been collected from which to form a sound conclusion, these data must be compared with other data drawn from the individual experiences or convictions of the members of the group, their own problems, or social, civic, and international problems; and, in the light of this comparison, a general statement must be found about the facts in question.

The leader may use as many illustrations as seem necessary for purposes of comparison. The more practical, simple, and homely the illustrations, the better. The unfamiliar is often irritating unless

carefully connected with the familiar. Illustrations from industrial life should not be chosen for a group of farmers, or from the routine of housekeeping for a group of men. Most people are simple and practical and dislike being forced to strain for a point.

Comparisons are indicated by the following questions:

1. "What is the usual result of such an attitude?" [i.e. that of the average American towards Japan.]
2. "How do Japanese and American characteristics differ?"
3. "What is the price of such conditions?" [i.e. present industrial conditions of Japan.]
4. "Wherein have these religions failed?" [i.e. the chief religions of Japan.]

(Note that these follow the presentation questions indicated previously.)

4. *Generalization.* In this step a general statement must be reached by means of the comparison of facts presented. This is the general truth which the whole session has been planned to reach. It is not forced on the group, but is the logical outcome of the discussion. The leader should be careful that this statement of general truth comes from the group, and is not a dogmatic statement imposed on them by the leader. The importance of this step is easily seen. Without it, the discussion may simply cease at a given time, wandering away into nothing. The general truth reached in the session is an expression of the new knowledge acquired by the comparison of facts. Each session must be led to a definite conclusion.

Examples may serve to make this step clear.

1. The general truth arrived at by discussion is that the real "Yellow Peril" is contained in the fact that Japan is not Christian.
2. The general truth is that Christ is the standard of character for all races.
3. The general truth is that the principles of Christ can help the Japanese solve their social problems.
4. The general truth is that Christianity offers a Gospel adequate for the new life which they have learned to prize.

(Note that these illustrations follow those indicated on previous pages in connection with Presentation and Comparison.)

5. *Application.* In order to insure action, the application of the general truth thus reached by logical discussion must be made clear and definite.

During the various sessions in which the course is being developed, the application should point the way on to the next problem. In the course on *Creative Forces in Japan*, the final question in the first session—"How is this 'peril' to be met and conquered?"—involves, in its answer, that we must know the Japanese people and their problems, thus necessarily including an outline of the course.

In the fourth session, the final question—"What is the relation of Christianity to these industrial problems?"—involves in its answer a discussion of Christian public opinion, which naturally suggests a comparison with the basis of Japanese public opinion as found in their religions, and so leads to the discussion of Japanese religions in the next session.

In the closing session, the application should be not only definite, but also inspiring. During the course, the action desired is further study and

thought. At the close of the course, the action should be the definite offer of self to the cause of building the Kingdom through personal service, thought, prayers, and gifts. Much time, therefore, should be spent in the preparation of the concluding questions, Bible passages, and prayers. A leader should never leave these to chance, and so allow the course to drift to nothing.

Illustrative Lesson Outlines

The following illustrations may serve to show the value of a definite and logical order of arrangement in the preparation of a lesson outline. The leader will also find it helpful to study the arrangements of lesson outlines as found in the "Suggestions for Leaders" for *Creative Forces in Japan*, *Christian Stewardship*, *China's Real Revolution*, and *The World, My Neighbor*. These may be obtained for 25 cents each from The Book Store, Church Missions House, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

Illustrative Lesson Outline

(Showing the Main Points in the Line of Argument)

Japan—Session V

Problem: How can Christianity help the Japanese to meet their new day?

1. *Preparation:* Review; showing the conclusion of the preceding session, that Japanese social conditions cannot be bettered while Japan remains a heathen nation.

2. *Presentation:* The chief teachings of the native Japanese religions are listed.

3. *Comparison:* These lists are used as a basis of a discussion showing that the native Japanese religions are not helping Japan meet her new day.

4. *Generalization:* These lists are again used as a basis for the development of the general statement that much of the faith of the Japanese can be used in teaching Christianity —"I came not to destroy but to fulfil."

5. *Application:* The lives of notable Japanese Christians who are helping Japan meet her new day, are shown as exemplifying Christian teaching; leading on to a discussion, in the following session, of all Christian missionary effort in Japan.

The following outline represents a single session for one discussion meeting which is not a part of a course, and for which no textbook was used.

SOCIAL SERVICE

Problem: What should the Christian people in this community do about our local prison?

1. *Preparation:* A brief discussion showing how our Lord regarded outcasts of society.

2. *Presentation:* A list is made showing conditions needing reform in the local prison.

3. *Comparison:* A discussion follows of the reasons why reforms are not made, including such a question as this: What forces in the community are reactionary?—and leading up to the

4. *Generalization:* The Christian forces should be responsible for bringing about the necessary reforms, and to the

5. *Application:* Making a program of action to improve the local jail.

THE USE OF THE LESSON OUTLINE

Since no dogmatic statements are to be made by the leader, but the group is to discuss freely, ques-

tions must be used to lead the group from step to step of any thought process. The line of argument, therefore, having been formed for any session in a definite and logical order, questions are then formed by means of which data may be obtained from the group and thoughts expressed in words. The further development of the lesson outline by the formation of questions will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMATION OF QUESTIONS

THE successive points in the thought process which should be used as a line of argument for discussion groups have been thoroughly explained and illustrated. The next step in the preparation of a lesson outline is to form questions on these points so that the group may be led smoothly and without a break in the thought from one step to the other until conviction is secured. That the points thus outlined as forming a line of argument may also be used as the basis for an address or lecture will be evident. However, in the discussion method, these points are developed by the use of questions, the answers to which lead to the conclusion suggested in the aim. When preparing a lesson outline, therefore, the leader, having outlined the argument according to the rules governing natural processes of thought, must decide on the main questions and arrange them in a logical sequence.

Illustrations of the formation of questions from the main points in the argument may be taken from the outlines previously used as illustrative of the natural thought process. These are here condensed. (See page 30.)

Illustrative Lessons

Illustration I

Analysis of Problem, Line of Argument, and Questions.

Problem: Where shall I spend my summer vacation this year?

Line of Argument (Condensed)

Preparation:	1. I am worn out.
Presentation:	2. I shall take my vacation either at the mountains or the seashore.
Comparison:	3. Both mountains and seashore offer certain inducements.
Generalization:	4. Seashore offers greater inducements.
Application:	5. I will go to the seashore.

Questions

1. What is the matter with me?
2. Where shall I go for a vacation?
3. What inducements do the various places I know of offer?
4. Shall I go to the mountains or to the seashore?
5. What details for my trip must I attend to at once?

ILLUSTRATION II

Analysis of Problem, Line of Argument, and Questions.

Problem: What shall I do with Mary while I go to the movies?

Line of Argument (Condensed)

Preparation:	1. I have been asked to go to the movies.
Presentation:	2. I must do something with Mary.
Comparison:	3. I might leave her at home or send her to play with Mrs. Smith's little girl.
Generalization:	4. I tell Mary to go to Mrs. Smith's.
Application:	5. I will send her to Mrs. Smith's.

QUESTIONS

1. What plans have I for the afternoon?
2. What shall I do with Mary?
3. Who will take care of her?
4. Where will she be happiest?
5. What message shall I send to Mrs. Smith?

The questions asked in the illustrations above will lead the mind along the line of argument as outlined although of course there is always a possibility, as in

all discussions, of a different conclusion being reached from the one planned.

Varieties of Questions

In any lesson outline there are two varieties of questions which must be given careful consideration.

1. *The main questions* which are to be given to the group for purposes of study.

2. *The sub-questions* which are to be used by the leader at the meeting to carry on the argument.

I. *Main Questions:*

1. *The number of main questions* depends on the number necessary to cover the subject and reach the aim. While there are five steps in the natural thought process, there need not be five questions in each lesson outline.

In some cases three questions may be asked on the same step in the thought process; in others, one question may include two steps in the thought process. The following illustrations may serve to make this point clear.

Illustrative Lessons Showing Number of Questions

I. Wanted—Leaders—Session V

1. How would you describe the typical Negro of today?
2. To what causes are the chief weaknesses of the modern Negro due?
3. On what is the further development of the Negro dependent?
4. In what respects do the parochial schools of the South and the American Church Institute schools meet your ideals for the education of the Negro?
5. How far do the Church schools meet a real need in the development of the Negro race?

In this illustration, the Preparatory step is covered by review which is not indicated by any question. Questions 1, 2 and 3 cover Presentation; question 4 indicates Comparison; question 5, Generalization. The Application is implied, but is not represented by any main question.

II. Creative Forces in Japan—Session V

(See the outline of the thought process previously described on page 39.)

1. Describe the chief religions of Japan.
2. Wherein have these religions failed?
3. How have these religions prepared the way for Christianity?
4. What is the appeal of Christianity to the Japanese?

In this illustration, the Preparatory step is covered by review and therefore is not indicated by a question. The four questions each indicate one step in the thought process—Question 1 covers Presentation; question 2, Comparison; question 3, Generalization; question 4, Application, which in this session is the desire for the further study of all Christian work in Japan—the subject for Session VI.

III. Creative Forces in Japan—Session II

1. What are the traditional characteristics of the Japanese people?
2. How has the location of Japan affected the characteristics of her people?
3. How do Japanese and American characteristics differ?
4. How far do American and Japanese characteristics approximate Christ?

In this example, the Preparatory step is covered by review for which no question is indicated. Questions 1 and 2 cover Presentation; question 3, Com-

parison; question 4 includes both the Generalization and Application which are definitely indicated by sub-questions.

Notice that the question for the Preparatory step is not necessarily given out in advance to the class, but may be used by the leader when the group meets and is formed according to the discussion of the preceding session, or the special interests of the group.

2. *The order of the main questions* of the lesson outline is determined by the steps in the natural thought process. Questions must follow a predetermined order which develops the train of thought in logical sequence. An interesting discussion may be held on four unrelated questions, but in such a case the arrival at a logical conclusion which will result in action is extremely unlikely.

3. *The function of each main question* is to provoke study and thought.

4. *These main questions must be followed in thought* at the meeting even though they are not used in the exact form in which they are given to the members of the group for study. Although the wording may be changed, it must be apparent to the group members that they are being followed in thought. If they are not thus followed, the session will not be clear to the average mind.

5. *The main questions must be answered* during the discussion held at the group meeting; otherwise sound conclusions cannot be reached.

6. *The main questions*, together with the subject and the Bible reading if the leader desires, *make up the assignment* given to the class in advance of the meeting. (See illustrations from Session V of

Wanted—Leaders, and *Creative Forces in Japan.* Pages 44-45.)

7. In the case of single group meetings or the first session of a course, where no assignment can be given in advance, *the main questions form the basis of the discussion*, and stand in the position of topic headings as the group advances from one point in the thought to another.

II. *Sub-Questions:*

To make the thought clear, main questions must be divided into their component parts. The development of the thought under discussion must be aided by sub-questions. It will be clear from the examples given from the courses on *Wanted—Leaders* and *Creative Forces in Japan*, that the main questions can be divided into many parts. It will also be evident that they are "thought-questions" which do not admit of quick and easy answers.

As an illustration, take the first question of Session II of the Japan course.

1. What are the traditional characteristics of the Japanese people? (Main question.)

COMPONENT PARTS EXPRESSED BY SUB-QUESTIONS

1. How does one judge a people fairly?
2. How does one judge an individual fairly?

Answers: By what they do; by what they admire; by what they consider desirable; by what they make their aims in life; by what they make their standard of values, etc.

3. How may one judge the characteristics of the modern Japanese?
4. What do they admire?
5. What have they done?
6. What do their accomplishments show in regard to mental characteristics?

7. What does their school system show in regard to character?
8. What have they made their aims in life?
9. What is their standard of values?
10. What is their attitude toward the beauty of their country?
11. What does this show in regard to character?
12. What influence has their history had on their character?
13. What characteristics have helped the nation to advance?

The Uses of Sub-Questions

Sub-questions are used further:

A. To lead from one main question to another without a break in thought.

As an illustration, take the first session of *The World My Neighbor*. The assignment stands thus:

Subject—The Need of the World.
Bible Reading—Isaiah 11:1-9.

Questions

1. What is the greatest need of the world today?
2. How is the Church meeting the need of the world?
3. What results may be expected from Christian leadership?

(Note, that in this session question 1 includes Preparation and Presentation; question 2, Comparison and Generalization; and question 3, Application.)

The sub-questions used to develop the thought from question 1 to question 2 are as follows:

1. What is the greatest need of the world today?
   a. Read the clipping from the Saturday Evening Post as printed in *The World My Neighbor,* page 12.
   b. What problems are the result of the late War? (List these on the blackboard.)
   c. Where do these problems exist?

d. What are the causes for this world-wide unrest?
e. What are the cures for these causes?
f. How may the cures be applied to these causes?
g. What is the greatest need in the world today?
h. What responsibility has the Church in this matter?
2. How is the Church meeting the need of the world?

Sub-questions, such as those indicated which are needed for the development of main questions, should be prepared by the leader in advance of the meeting, and used or not as the case may require. After asking the main question, the leader should at once, without necessarily waiting for an answer, begin to analyze it by the use of these or other sub-questions. If the full development of the main questions can be secured without the particular sub-questions which have been prepared, then they should not be used; but others more appropriate to the thought, as it develops in the group, should be substituted for them.

B. Sub-questions which are needed to aid the progress of thought by making use of the answers given by group members, cannot be prepared in advance. Many times, quite unexpected answers are given by members of the group. These must not be discarded, but must be used by the leader to develop the thought. This is one of the most vital uses of the sub-question.

As an illustration, suppose that in Session I of *The World My Neighbor*, some member of the group replies to the first question—"What is the greatest need of the world today?"—that the world needs everything and that one cannot specify a greatest need; and that the question is therefore impossible to answer. In this case, the leader at once discards the sub-question already prepared, and forms one

appropriate to the answer given, as for instance: "Let us be a little more explicit about your answer —'everything is wrong with the world.' What does 'everything' include? Can we make a list on the blackboard?" When the list is made, although the wording has been different, the thought has been drawn to the same point to which the sub-question (b), as prepared, would have drawn it—"What problems are the result of the Great War?" The leader has, therefore, developed the same point by a different sub-question, and can proceed with the sub-question (c) as prepared—"Where do these problems exist?" The leader must remember that the discussion method deals with ideas, although the words used to express such ideas may vary.

C. Another useful service of the sub-question is to prevent digressions. When a digression is introduced, the leader should use a sub-question to lead the thought back to the main issue. Suppose, for example, that when the question of the problems of the Great War is discussed a member of the group launches on his favorite hobby, political graft, and threatens to occupy the whole session with an expression of his intense feelings on the subject. The leader may use a sub-question to relate political graft to the whole, and add it to the list of problems already on the blackboard. The sub-question thus serves to focus discussion.

D. The sub-question is also used to stimulate discussion. If, for any reason, the group is slow in answering questions, the leader should not begin to tell the answers, but should analyze the question into smaller and smaller divisions until the group can answer it. Then he can lead back, by sub-questions,

until the main question has its full development. The answer to a question should be made easy, not by a statement of the leader's opinion, but by a patient use of sub-questions.

That the use of sub-questions is a very vital part of the discussion method, is clear even in this short discussion. It is an art which can be learned, as any other art may be, by study and practice.

Adaptation of Sub-Questions to Various Groups

The same line of argument and the same main questions may be used for discussion with any group; but the sub-questions by which the thought of the course is developed may have to be changed with different groups. A comparison with methods of secular schools makes this point clear.

Suppose that the teachers of history in New York State are teaching a course on the Napoleonic Era to a certain grade. They may all teach the following topics, planning to give one month to each:

1. The state of Europe at the opening of the era.
2. Particular study of France.
3. Napoleon's history, character, policies, and wars.
4. Changes in the map of Europe at the end of the era.
5. Review.

Each of these five divisions will be split into smaller parts which are planned to occupy one week each, thus:

1. The state of Europe at the opening of the era.
   a. Great nations of the time.
   b. Conditions in these nations.
   c. Weakness of the situation.
   d. Opportunities for the rise of a leader.

One teacher may develop these points by having the class publish a newspaper supposed to be written in the year 1800, and make that the basis for discussion.

Another may have the class make an imaginary trip from court to court through Europe, observe the conditions among the great nations, and draw conclusions from them.

Another teacher may develop the points by the use of a map and questions.

But note, that all classes will be taught the five main divisions and the sub-divisions of each topic. The fact that some classes come from homes of the rich and some from homes of the poor; some from the homes of the cultured and some from homes without culture; some American-born and some foreign-born; some from the country and some from the city; some backward and some advanced, these differences will not cause any teacher to change the outline for the course. The only difference made by the teacher for these different groups is a difference in the method of developing the subject.

So, in all courses to be led by the discussion method, the same line of argument and the same main topics, though not necessarily expressed by questions worded in the same way, may be used for all groups, whether in city or country, for college women or factory hands. The sub-questions, however, must be adapted to appeal to the special interests of the different groups.

The Formation of Questions

Since questions are of such great importance in the discussion method, the subject of the formation

of questions is of the utmost importance to the discussion-group leader. There are good questions and bad questions.

In general, questions may be judged by some such criteria as the following:

1. The language used in framing questions should be simple and direct. Familiar words should be used, and cumbersome sentence-structure avoided.

2. Questions should be definite and clear in meaning. If the group asks too many questions about any one question of the leader's, it may be taken as a sign that the leader's question is not clear. No question should be capable of half a dozen interpretations.

3. Questions should be related to the point of the session, and to each other. Each main question should carry the thought a step further toward the final solution or conclusion of the session. This can be determined by reading over the assignment. A poor question stands out as evidently unrelated to the other questions. No matter how interesting such a question may be, the leader should discard it ruthlessly.

4. Each question should call for not more than one or two points in the chain of reasoning. The leader should not attempt to cover too much ground in one question, as for instance: "What justification has California for its attitude toward Japan?" Such a question would involve a discussion of California's attitude, and of conditions in California and in Japan, with a subsequent comparison to test the justice of California's attitude. It might be used as a final question in a course, as a review of points already made; but as a single question in a session, it covers too much ground.

5. Questions should not contain a double proposition as in the following example: "What do you consider the outstanding obstacles which faced the first missionaries in Japan, and how do they differ from the difficulties of today?" The thought in such a question should be unified in a question formed in some such way as this: "How do the difficulties of the first missionaries in Japan compare with the difficulties facing missionaries in Japan today?"

6. Questions should place the burden of thinking upon the members of the group. The leader should avoid questions in which the answer is given in the question, such as this: "What basis do you think there is for the statement that 'the future of Japan's leadership will be determined by the sort of Christian education she receives'?" The thought embodied in the above question should be developed rather, thus: "By what do you believe the future of Japan's leadership will be determined?" In this latter question, no clue to the answer is given.

7. Questions should require the statement of an idea for an answer, and should not be framed in such a way that they can be answered by a simple "Yes" or "No." Instead of a question such as this: "Has Japan a powerful navy?" the same idea, together with others, should be developed by a question such as this: "On what is the power of Japan dependent?"

8. Questions should be interesting, graphic, and varied. In order to be interesting, questions must not be too simple. Leaders commonly make a mistake by assuming that the members of their groups cannot think. People do not have to be well-read or educated in order to think. Thinking is

more often the result of experience than of anything else. Everyone is interested in his own experiences. There is no group which cannot be led to think and to discuss, if the leader is careful to ask questions relating to the interests of the particular group in question. A successful leader does not underestimate the mental ability of the group.

9. Questions should be adapted to the group both in regard to the intelligence and the interests of the members. This does not mean that the idea contained in the question is changed, but simply the form of the question. The same line of argument may be used with any group, but the wording of the questions and the sub-questions may be different.

10. Questions asked should be worthy of an answer. There is no value in asking a question about something that could never be. Wasted energy annoys people.

11. Questions should be so framed as to present a debatable problem. There should be several possible answers to every question, so that the conclusion is not forced by the question nor the thinking of the group limited. Such a question as—"Did Commodore Perry open the ports of Japan?"—closes the subject instead of leading to further discussion.

12. The intelligence of the group should not be insulted by questions which are obviously true or obviously untrue, such as: "Should we, as Christians, send help to the Japanese earthquake sufferers?" "Are all the girls and boys who do not put money in their mite boxes bad?"

13. Catch or guess questions should not be used, such as: "What do you suppose I am thinking about as I look at the map of Japan?" Care should always

be taken that the group is doing honest thinking, and is not merely trying to guess at the thought in the leader's mind.

14. Questions should be asked in the positive and not in the negative form. "Why does the Christian Church not establish the Kingdom of God throughout the world?" would be better worded—"What defects in the Christian Church delay the coming of the Kingdom?"

15. Questions introduced by "What," "Where," "When," "How," and "Why," may generally be depended upon to stimulate thought.

Illustrative Lesson Outline

The following lesson outline as given in McMurry's *Method of the Recitation* deserves careful study. (The main questions in brackets have been added.) The leader should note the five steps in the progression of the argument, and the use and formation of questions.

Subject: Christ's Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

Aim: Let us see what Christ meant by His story about removing weeds from the wheat.

I. (What difficulties does a farmer meet in removing weeds growing in his wheat?)

(Preparation.)

1. Have you found weeds in a garden of your own? How were they gotten rid of? Why is that so necessary? Is there any danger to the other plants in so doing? Have you seen weeds growing in grain in the country? Where? In what grains? Is it more or less dangerous to remove weeds from wheat than from your flowers or vegetables in the garden? Why? What, then, does the farmer do with them?

II. (What was Christ's story about removing weeds from wheat?)

(Presentation.)

2a. Now let us listen to the story that Christ told about removing weeds from the wheat. That was in Palestine, and the particular weeds He mentioned are called tares. They are said to look very much like wheat. (Read St. Matthew 13: 24-31.) (If time allows, at least a portion of this parable could be developed instead of read.)

The children, after hearing or reading the parable, relate the same probably two or three times in order to see clearly the concrete situation.

Proceeding, we say, Why then, were the servants not allowed to pull up the tares? The chief answer is that in so doing they would root up the wheat, because the tares stand so close to the wheat that one could not be pulled up without injury to the other.

2b. Christ's disciples hardly knew what He meant by this story, and they asked Him about it. Do you think you can possibly tell what is meant? Let us see. He says that a man having a field of grain may be compared with the Kingdom of Heaven. If so, whom might the sower represent? Answer—Christ. And what would the field be? Answer—the world. Who would be meant by the good seed? Who by the tares? When will the harvest be? Who are the reapers?

III. (How does God distinguish between good people and bad people in the world?)

(Comparison.)

3. Are there many tares or wicked people in the world? Give examples, as thieves, murderers, etc. Those servants thought it would be wise to separate the tares from the wheat and gather them up; have you ever had the same feeling about the bad people in the world? Have you wanted to do away with the evil and leave only the good? Well, now, suppose you were allowed to separate the good from the

bad; if this permission were given you, how would you go at it?

(1) On which side, the good or the bad, would you place Jacob? You remember he deceived his aged father.

(2) What would you do with Moses? Remember that he killed a man. How did God regard him?

(3) On which side would you place Mary Magdalene? What did Christ think of her?

(4) Where would you place the Prodigal Son?

(5) Would you regard Judas as belonging among the wheat or the tares? You remember he was one of the disciples, and was trusted by them although he betrayed Christ later.

(6) What would you do with the brother of the Prodigal Son? He stayed at home and worked.

(7) What would you do with your friends and acquaintances?

Why are you confused in these cases? Once more, why would not the householder allow his servants to pull up the tares? Answer—they were too near the wheat stalks and too much like them to be separated from them. Does this help you here? How? Answer—(1) the evil is so near the good that they are both found in one person; (2) the good and bad often appear so much alike that often we are not able to tell them apart.

What conclusion, then, do you reach about our trying to separate the good from the bad? But what if we went ahead and decided to attempt it nevertheless? Wrong!! Who, then, will attend finally to this separation? Why are angels chosen for it rather than men?

IV. (What does the Parable of the Tares teach about the Christian attitude toward people who do wrong?)

(Generalization.)

4. (1) Which verse in the parable most clearly calls for delay in separating the bad from the good? Look them through to see. Verse 30. "Let both grow together until the harvest." Are you con-

vinced that this applies as much to good and bad people as to wheat and tares?

(2) Do you call to mind another verse that brings to mind a similar thought? You have heard it often. It begins with the word *"judge."* St. Matthew 7:1. *"Judge not."* Let us learn these two verses, then, and hereafter when the Parable of the Tares is called for, you may state its chief thought for us by these two verses.

V. (How can you apply this teaching in your school life?)

5. (1) At the close of this talk, Christ said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Why do you think He said that? What did He want them to hear?

(2) Is it true that people have failed in times past to listen to this teaching? What examples from history show this? St. Bartholomew's massacre, witchcraft, the Jews' treatment of Christ, etc.

(3) Have you ever been misjudged yourself? How did you feel about it?

(4) Have you ever misjudged others? How did you feel about it then when you discovered that you had been wrong?

(5) Have you ever really attempted to stop judging others so freely? ("Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.")

(6) What comforting thought do you find in this lesson?

Answer: That we should not be too much discouraged at seeing wickedness allowed to continue. We are taught not to be too impatient over the matter.

CHAPTER V

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GROUP MEETING

THE formation of the lesson outline which is such an essential part of the leader's preparation must necessarily be completed before the group meets. The question of how to use this outline when the leader is in the presence of the group is the next subject for consideration. Here an understanding of the management of human personalities must be included with that of the use of the lesson outline.

Every member of a group has some reason for coming to a group meeting. He may come because he feels a sense of duty which requires him to attend; he may come because he is interested in the subject and wants to come; he may come simply out of curiosity to see what a discussion group is like; he may come out of kindness to the leader because his conscience tells him that there must be an audience; he may come with an attitude of condescension since, as the leader is an amateur (which is usually true in discussion groups in the Church), he expects to gain little or nothing from his attendance. The leader, therefore, works against preconceived ideas in the minds of the members of the group. He must strive to make every detail of the meeting as finished as possible so that the members, no matter for what reason they may have come to the meeting, may gain something valuable while there. Naturally, it is

worse than useless to hold a discussion group if nothing of value is to be gained.

Certain results may reasonably be expected from well planned, well conducted discussion groups. Members of such groups should gain more interest in the subject under discussion, some definite knowledge in regard to it, and a respect for the work of the Church and the workers (this is often lacking in the uninformed group in the average parish). Members of discussion groups should gain a respect for other people's opinions and a disapproval of merely destructive criticism. This appreciation of the value of different points of view should lead to a deep desire for fellowship with other Christians in the parish. As a result of the discussion, the scope of this desire for Christian fellowship should be broadened to include all Christian people everywhere. At some point in every well planned course each member of a group should realize that he is facing the problem under discussion from the point of view of eternity—of God. Members of discussion groups should gain a desire to further the work of the Kingdom by prayer and by gifts both of personal, devoted service, and of money. The desire for service may be expressed by a willingness to lead other discussion groups as a definite contribution to the extension of the Kingdom.

If such results are to be obtained, then no time which the leader is required to spend in preparation for the group meeting should seem too long, and no study too arduous. He should avail himself of every means to make the meetings productive of valuable results.

The reasons why a carefully prepared lesson out-

line is of great aid to the leader have already been fully described. Many cases of stage fright are caused by inadequate preparation. The general procedure at the meeting is very simple if the outline of the session is in definite form.

The Order of Procedure of the Group Meeting

The meeting should be opened with a carefully selected prayer, after which the sub-questions necessary to complete the preparatory step or to cover the review should be asked. Details in regard to the management of the preparatory step, and of the review have been given on preceding pages (See pages 34-35.)

When the minds of the group are fully prepared for the first topic by these introductory questions, then the leader should ask the first main question and, without necessarily waiting for an answer, should begin to analyze and develop it by means of sub-questions. The main questions should never be used without the aid of sub-questions to develop the thought smoothly and logically. As the thought progresses, each main question should be asked in turn, and introduced and developed by sub-questions until the conclusion is reached and the application made.

The Giving of the Assignment

After the general truth has been reached and the application suggested and discussed, the assignment for the next session should be given to the group. This is composed of the main questions outlined for the next session, with special reading assigned in the textbook if one is used, or in other reference material

easily available to the group. The questions of the assignment may be dictated while the members write them down, or they may be distributed on typewritten slips. In any case, an effort should be made to interest the group in the meeting which is to follow. If the session has been well planned, the discussion will naturally lead to the subject next to be discussed and the assignment will come as a natural continuation of the argument. Care should be taken, however, not to discuss the questions for the following meeting too thoroughly when the assignment is given out, for fear that the discussion of the succeeding session may be an anti-climax, its most important conclusions having already been reached by the discussion of the questions.

In case the leader feels that, for any reason, it would be better not to give all the main questions to a group, he may simply announce the subject and the reference reading when the discussion has reached the point where it seems natural for the subject of the next meeting to be announced, as for instance: "In our next session we will discuss the social problems of Japan. If you will read Chapter III of the textbook, you will find the author's views on the subject."

In other cases, the problem-question for the session may be given as the assignment instead of the four or five main questions, as for instance: "At our next meeting, we will discuss the following question—How may Christian leaders be developed for the Negro race? While you are reading Chapter VII of the textbook, please give this question your serious consideration so that you will be ready to discuss it when we meet the next time."

After the assignment has been given, the leader should, by a few sub-questions or a short reading, lead the group to restate the conclusions reached in the meeting, thus bringing the discussion back again to the subject of the session. Then the Bible reading with which the session is ended will close it forcefully, and the fact that this embodies the conclusion reached in the discussion will be perfectly clear to all the members of the group.

The session should be closed with carefully selected prayers, and the group should go out from the meeting with a clear conviction reached by discussion, summed up in the Bible reading and voiced in the prayers.

The Use of the Textbook

The textbook should be used as an aid to valuable discussion and not as an end in itself. The author's opinions need not be regarded as final, but may be freely discussed and differed with. The leader should make such references to the textbook during the meeting as are necessary to keep the aim clear, to prevent misunderstanding, or to answer questions which perplex members of the group; but in no case should any textbook be followed word for word or page by page in a discussion group. Textbooks necessarily present only a part of any subject. Care should be taken to develop the subject in all its fullness, bringing in material from other books and from experience, as well as from the textbook.

The Management of Time

In handling any subject at a group meeting, one of the difficulties confronting the leader is the manage-

ment of time. If too much time is spent on the first part of the session, there is a danger that the conclusion will not be reached and that consequently the members of the group may leave the meeting with a very confused idea of what they have been discussing.

If the number of sessions for any series of meetings were unlimited, one might safely take the preparatory and presentation steps in one session, the comparison in another, and the generalization and application in another. But since most groups meet for a definitely prescribed period and for a limited number of sessions, the management of the time of each meeting must be carefully watched so that the thought is brought to a conclusion with an application at least suggested before the allotted time has elapsed. Some sort of time table should be made for each meeting, so that no question is omitted; but the leader should watch the time quietly, as far as possible unobserved by the group, whose interest should be focused on the discussion. The leader should never call attention to the time by some such remark as, for instance, that there is no time for this or that discussion, since a remark of this kind immediately draws the attention of the group from the subject in hand to the clock and prevents the free development of the thought which is essential to a successful discussion.

On the other hand, the discussion should not be continued after the conclusion has been reached and the application made, even though the time allotted for the meeting is not quite consumed. The purpose of a discussion group is to reach conclusions on certain evidence and not simply to consume a certain

amount of time. When the aim is reached, the leader should close the session.

Group meetings should begin and end on time. If some members of the group come at the time announced and are obliged to wait for later comers, their interest is apt to be lost because of mental boredom even before the meeting begins, and they greet the opening of the discussion without enthusiasm. Moreover, people are too busy in these days either to waste time waiting for a meeting to start, or to linger long after it should be ended.

The leader will find that the management of time is made very much easier by a well prepared lesson outline. First, because if a leader has clearly in his own mind the aim of the session and the steps in the argument by which this aim is to be reached, his task in leading the group is much simplified; and secondly, because, if the leader has planned the session with a view to securing and holding interest and attention, and if, during the meetings, he makes use of the sub-questions necessary to secure this result, the group will pass quickly from one step in the argument to another with no loss of time. Moreover, few if any irrelevant remarks will be made by the group when the attention is firmly fixed on the subject in hand by a well prepared leader. The importance of the preparatory step in securing attention and interest has been previously described. (See page 32.)

The leader must hold the interest of the greatest number of the members even when irrelevant remarks are introduced, or when a purely personal discussion arises which threatens to consume a great deal of time. The corporate interest of the group should

not be lost because of the difficulties of one member. However, the individual should be helped with his special difficulties after the group meeting has ended.

Special Assignments

Special subjects may be given to members of the group for study and report, if the leader considers this desirable in exceptional cases. The danger of such a method is contained in the fact that so much time may be consumed by these special reports, that the free discussion of the group is injured; or, that the attention and interest of the majority of the members may be lost while one individual occupies the center of the stage. In general, such special assignments should be avoided, and the effort of the leader be directed to the stimulation of a general discussion.

The Stimulation of General Discussion

This stimulation of general discussion is one of the most difficult parts of group management for an inexperienced leader. If a group is silent and refuses to discuss, the leader should try to discover the cause. It may be that the question under discussion either does not establish a point of contact between the subject and the group, or is misunderstood. In that case, the leader should continue to ask sub-questions until a point of contact is secured, or the question made clear. This method has previously been described in connection with the use of sub-questions. (See page 50.)

The cause of silence may be simply that the group is shy. In this case, the leader may tell a personal experience or a story on which discussion may be

based until a bond of human sympathy is established between him and the group. Such a personal experience or story must be something which will introduce the subject to be discussed, and not merely something which is amusing.

Sometimes silence is produced by the fact that the group has not sufficient knowledge to answer the leader's question. In this case, the facts must be supplied by the leader. The leader of a discussion group should be careful not to waste time in an attempt to develop, by discussion, facts which cannot be given by the group. By such an attempt, the discussion becomes a mere guessing contest to see who can guess what is in the leader's mind, and so it loses its value. In order to insure a valuable discussion, the facts must be in possession of the members as a basis for reasoning. (See description of the Presentation step on page 35.) The leader may give these necessary facts by referring to the textbook and reading them to the group, or asking them to read them; by direct statement in case no textbook is used; by relating an incident which brings them out clearly; or by reading from clippings from other printed material, such as books, newspapers and magazines. Care should be taken that facts thus given by the leader are not considered the end, rather than the beginning, of the meeting. When the facts are clearly in the minds of the members of the group, then by sub-questions the leader must bring out their significance, compare them with other knowledge and experiences, and so reach the aim of the session.

Sometimes the discussion is slow for the reason that there are members in the group who because they do not want to see certain points do not follow the de-

velopment of thought. There are some individuals who are naturally negative, or who like to show off their superior knowledge when they meet with a group. Such persons must be handled with tact and patience, and made, if possible, to contribute to the general discussion. Quotations from authorities on the subject in hand are an aid to the leader when such a situation develops in a group.

While the leader may make statements of facts when they are necessary to form a basis for discussion, he may not make statements of his own opinion without injuring the value of the course. Facts may be told to a group, but an understanding of the significance of those facts must be the result of original thinking on the part of the members. The expressions "I think," "It seems to me," "I believe," "Don't you agree with me?" must be eliminated from the vocabulary of a successful discussion-group leader. The reasons why a leader thinks as he does may be interesting but unless he is a recognized authority on the subject, his conclusions are worthless as proof or evidence.

Impersonations

An impersonation is sometimes used to stimulate discussion, but if used for this purpose it must be terminated briefly in order that general discussion may continue. The dangers of the use of an impersonation are many, and, as a rule, direct questioning produces far clearer and more logical thinking and, therefore, sounder conclusions on the part of the group. If the leader attempts, for any length of time, to play the part of some figure with which discussion is concerned, he is apt to create a false

atmosphere. The comments of the group members become self-conscious and stereotyped; no one says what he really thinks; and the whole discussion becomes stilted rather than free. The fact that the group is amused, does not insure valuable discussion.

This method may with profit be used indirectly. For example, the leader may ask such a question as this: "Suppose that you were a Japanese Buddhist, what arguments would you be likely to use in discussing the respective virtues of the two religions with a Christian?" The answers to this question should then be made the basis for an argument between imaginary persons, to be followed by a discussion on the same subject by the members of the group. Under these conditions, this method may serve as a valuable means for the stimulation of discussion. An impersonation should never be used, however, except as the presentation step in order to supply the facts necessary for the formation of conclusions, and should never, therefore, occupy the time of the entire session. That leader has failed who sends the group away laughing at his own cleverness in dramatics rather than with serious thought on some subject related to the Kingdom of God.

This does not mean that a leader may never tell an amusing story or that a group should never laugh. An amusing story, however, should always leave uppermost in the minds of the group not the humor, but the main thought involved in the discussion.

Rules for Group Management

Certain general rules for group management may aid the inexperienced leader.

1. Keep the discussion on vital points. In guiding the discussion, the leader should remember to emphasize the ideas important for the development of the argument, and to discard minor points which are not essential. He must learn to discriminate between important and unimportant ideas, and to ask his questions to bring out the important thoughts. A carefully thought out aim will aid the leader greatly, as he may then judge each point as it is brought out according as it does or does not help him to reach his aim.

2. Discard irrelevant matter. This may be done:

(a) By listening to all the answers but asking sub-questions on only the important ones given. In this case, the leader finds that the unimportant answers are forgotten while the important ones form the basis for discussion.

(b) By listing all the answers on the blackboard, and then selecting the most important by means of discussion with the group.

(c) By the use of a sub-question which calls attention anew to the subject directly under discussion.

3. Keep the discussion on ideas, not on words. The leader should not demand an answer to any question in the exact words which he has listed in his note-book, neither should he allow the discussion to degenerate into a lifeless quibble over the meaning of words or terms.

4. Argument, for the sake of argument, must not be allowed, as it prevents the logical progression of thought. Any private contention between two members of the group should be stopped at once and the whole group again drawn into the general discussion.

This may be accomplished by asking a sub-question which will direct the thought of the group back to the main topic under discussion.

5. In leading group discussion, the leader must be perfectly fair-minded. He must not take advantage of his position as leader to force personal opinions. He must remember that mere assertion is not argument and that, therefore, he must not ask anyone to believe what he says simply because he says it is true. He must not flatly contradict the statements of any member of the group. In any case of disagreement the leader must allow the group to decide which are the stronger arguments. A leader gains, rather than loses, by an evident willingness to give due weight to the arguments on all sides of the question. A leader who is trying to force his own opinions soon finds that his group has become silent although not necessarily convinced.

6. The leader must remember that in all debates, the affirmative should hold the strong position. There is a danger, particularly in the use of the method of impersonation, that the anti-Christian position may be presented more forcibly than the Christian position, and thus the purpose of the whole course be defeated. In all discussions among Church people, the Christian position should be stated positively, and the negative side be forced to attempt to prove its position tenable if it can.

7. The leader must see that there is no ambiguity in the use of terms. A group may work itself into a bitter controversy over imaginary disagreements, when they are really confused as to the meaning of words or terms, some using a word with one interpretation and some with another.

8. The leader should avoid hasty generalizations as they weaken his power to convince.

9. The leader should never be careless about references or authorities. Such errors may destroy the confidence of the group in the accuracy of all his statements.

10. The leader should not attempt to force a conclusion in case the group has not arrived at any conclusion at the end of the meeting. Rather, he should, in a perfectly natural way, call attention to the fact that the discussion has not been finished, and suggest that the discussion at the next meeting will be a further development of the subject. He may also assign certain reference reading which will clear up the difficulties which prevented a conclusion being reached. A conclusion, to be valuable, must be reached *by the group*. The leader does not convince the group simply by stating his own conclusion at the end of the group meeting. The danger of failure to reach conclusions is very much lessened by the preparation of a good lesson outline. If, at the end of the course, no definite conclusions of any kind have been reached, the time of the group has been wasted.

11. All members of the group should be treated with courtesy. The leader should have a real respect for the personality, feelings, and opinions of each member of the group.

12. The leader should never try to show how much more he knows about a subject than the members of the group know. Competing in cleverness with members of a discussion group is not worthy of a leader. A successful leader effaces his own personality, putting all of his knowledge and power at the disposal of the group to help them reach valuable conclusions.

13. The leader should try to make all the members of the group contribute to the discussion. This requires alertness on the part of the leader in shifting the discussion back and forth between the slower and the quicker ones, and from the whole group to the individual. The leader should never be so interested in his own plan that he does not notice that certain members of the group are not following, or entering into the discussion.

14. The leader should be very careful not to ask a sub-question which will introduce a digression into the thought of the meeting which is not really germane. Sometimes a favorite hobby of the leader's tempts him to do this. In such a case, there is a great danger of failure to reach conclusions. If digressions are introduced, they should be plainly noted as digressions.

15. Care should be taken to avoid the degeneration of a discussion group into a general criticism of the parish and its officers, or into a general discussion of parish or community gossip.

How to Learn to Manage Group Discussion

A study of these rules for group-management will furnish abundant proof that the discussion method must not only be studied but practiced. Difficulties in group-management differ with the individual leader and the personnel of groups. Experience is the best teacher in group-management. No leader of discussion groups can reasonably expect to learn the method in its perfection in a few weeks. However, any one who is willing to devote time and thought to the study and practice of the art can be a successful leader.

In *The Method of the Recitation*, McMurry brings this comfort to the beginner in the use of this method:

> "While teaching is difficult there is comfort in the fact that it is the kind of work in which skill can be acquired. It is not true that 'teachers are born, not made.' The average person can become or be made a teacher, provided he will study the child (or adult) and the laws of influencing him with the same care that he studies the subjects to be offered."

Every leader who is alert and open-minded soon learns that certain spiritual forces and certain mechanical devices will aid him greatly in the management of a discussion group.

The leader and the aids available for his help will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE LEADER OF THE GROUP

THE fact that a great deal of the success of the discussion group depends on the leader must be evident from the preceding chapters of this book. People sometimes refuse to be leaders because they are frightened by the responsibility which would rest on them for making the group a success. Results, however, justify the claim that the leading of discussion groups constitutes a real call to service for the Kingdom. The man or woman to whom such an opportunity is given should not refuse to try, but should endeavor, by every means at his disposal, to prepare himself to be a leader.

There are certain aids on which the leader may depend for help in securing valuable results from group discussion. These may be described under three heads:

1. The cultivation of one's own personality, so that it may be a force which presents Christ and His work.
2. The creation of a spiritual atmosphere in the group.
3. Mechanical aids.

I. *The Cultivation of the Leader's Personality:*

1. The successful leader of discussion groups in the Church must offer his work as a definite piece of service for the Kingdom of God.

2. The leader must prepare himself to make his offering acceptable in the sight of God by using the means which He provides:

a. By reading, studying and meditating on His word.
b. By prayer.
c. By the Holy Communion.

The leader of discussion groups cannot expect to lead others to see the Kingdom unless he himself sees it clearly with the knowledge and vision which comes from thoughtful, prayerful Bible study; neither can any leader conduct a group with power unless he is using the power of God which our heavenly Father promises to those who ask Him in the Name of Jesus. The leader should pray for the members of the groups he is leading, and for himself that he may be free from doubt, discouragement, impatience, and unworthy aims, and so may be enabled to guide their feet along the paths of God in fellowship with Him. Only by prayer can the leader realize, and make the group realize, that the Holy Spirit is the real teacher of every group guiding into the ways of truth.

The leader may be further strengthened by the prayers of some one whom he has asked to pray for him and for the group during the hours of meeting, or on the days when the group meets. The knowledge that some one was making intercession for that group has helped and strengthened many leaders in their tasks; and the prayers of such intercessors have many times been answered by real results from the group.

The leader should attend celebrations of the Holy Communion regularly; and, if possible, go out to meet the discussion group from that service where he

has, with thanksgiving and prayer, dedicated himself, his soul and body, anew to God, "to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice."

3. The leader who has thus dedicated himself will have that deep sincerity which is such a force in group meetings. A quiet, consistent, Christian life has more influence than much oratory. What a leader *is*, is far more apparent than what *he says*.

4. A leader who keeps his aims clearly before him by prayer, Bible study, and attendance at the Holy Communion, will be earnest and energetic, realizing that to reach such high aims requires constant effort; and he will be willing to give the necessary time for the preparation of his work.

5. The leader should try constantly to improve and expand his mental resources. He should be interested in current events in the larger world of business, politics, and social reform; and he should study the problems engaging popular attention. This knowledge is essential if a leader is to be fitted to show the connection between present day problems and the Kingdom of God. Social contacts with people in their homes, at business, or in their Church life are valuable aids to a leader. The leader should make an effort to attend general lectures, exhibits and plays so that he may have an intelligent interest in the things about which the world is talking and be able to use them as illustrations in group discussion.

6. The leader should select one phase of group-leading which particularly appeals to him and make a special study of it; and then try to put into operation his discoveries along this special line. He may be especially interested, for instance, in the formation of questions. He should then study this point,

read what books he can find on the subject, and experiment with groups. When he feels that he is absolutely proficient in the matter of question formation, then he can select for intensive study another phase of his work. This exercise will greatly add to his interest in his work, as well as greatly improve his leading.

7. The leader should extend his knowledge beyond the textbook by outside reading from authorities on the subject. A book on the Life of Christ or the Christian faith and doctrines should be read in connection with every course so that the Life and Teachings of our Lord may be constantly reviewed. Outside of every textbook, there is a world of books on travel, biography, history and discovery, as well as some novels, all of which enrich greatly the leader's knowledge of a subject, and aid him in group discussion.

8. The leader is also aided by certain details of dress and manner:

a. A good personal appearance makes a favorable impression. While elaborate and expensive clothes are not necessary, the leader should be careful to be dressed neatly, attractively and suitably.

b. The leader should avoid affectation and be as natural in a group meeting as though he were entertaining a group of friends in his own home. Mannerisms should be carefully watched and avoided. They attract attention to the leader rather than to the subject under discussion.

c. The leader should seek to be physically fresh and rested when he meets his groups so that no mental irritation caused by fatigue may weaken his power.

d. Good manners have a real influence. The leader should cultivate them.

II. *The Creation of a Spiritual Atmosphere:*

Attention to all of these details will help to create an atmosphere for the group-meeting which will aid the leader. The value of atmosphere in the group should not be minimized. Feelings and moods are great factors in education. The business man knows this, and trains his salesmen to broach the subject of their business at the proper time. A child knows this instinctively, and watches his mother's mood before he asks for something which he knows may be difficult to obtain. The leader must likewise be careful to prepare the mood of the group so that the new topic may be accepted. For example, the proper atmosphere for prayer can not be obtained when late comers are finding their seats with much noise and confusion. Much effort may be wasted, simply because the spiritual atmosphere is such that no impression can be made.

The Elements of a Desirable Atmosphere. 1. A desirable atmosphere for a discussion group is one which is perfectly *sane* and sensible. The leader must not only avoid sentimentality himself, but must prevent any members of the group from attempting to substitute sentimentality for Christianity. The group should never be induced to disperse in tears. The leader is working for permanent conviction, and not for temporary emotion.

2. The atmosphere of the group should be *animated.* If the leader is tired or discouraged, this should not be so evident that it may be detected in his voice or manner. There should be manifest interest, heartiness and cheerfulness in the group.

3. The atmosphere should be *thoughtful.* All the members of the group should realize that they have

come to give serious thought to serious questions. This does not mean that they need be surrounded with solemnity or gloom, but that they should give their thoughtful interest to the discussion.

4. The atmosphere of the group should be *reverent*. There should never be a sense that the discussion is purely intellectual, but, rather, there should be a real feeling that it is inherently religious. We are "about our Father's business."

How to Create a Desirable Atmosphere. One of the duties of the leader is to create a proper atmosphere for the group so that as much impression as possible may be made. A certain attitude on the part of the leader toward the group will help to do this.

The leader's attitude toward the group:

a. The leader should display an intelligent sympathy with the varying points of view of the members of the group. As soon as the leader is recognized as friendly and helpful rather than dictatorial, the discussion becomes free and informal.
b. The leader must be fully prepared before he goes to the meeting and so be decisive, making the points clearly and with confidence.
c. The leader must be unhurried, at least outwardly. A breathless state of haste creates an impossible atmosphere for thoughtful discussion.
d. The leader should be modest without a sense of self-importance. He should never be afraid to admit that a point has been introduced about which he had never thought. A very unfavorable atmosphere is created by a leader who is trying to demonstrate his own superiority. True humility is a great asset in creating a favorable atmosphere.
e. A leader can not criticize, before a group, a plan which he has been asked to present by one of his superiors in office or one of his co-workers without

destroying the atmosphere necessary for a successful group.

f. If the group seems dull, the leader should study to discover where he is at fault in failing to interest them. The fault, as a rule, is more his than theirs.

g. The leader should be earnest, not seeking simply to amuse the group, but to lead them to valuable conclusions. The leading of discussion is not a game.

h. The leader should take care to hold his head up while speaking or reading and to speak loud enough and enunciate clearly enough to be heard by all the members of the group. If glasses have to be worn they should be carefully fitted so that they do not distract attention by continually slipping or falling off. If they are taken on and off, they should be deftly handled.

i. The leader should sit or stand in a good position before the group so that he may be seen by all its members. If the group is small enough, a more informal atmosphere is created if the leader sits rather than stands.

j. The leader should have patience with all the members of the group, helping them over their difficulties, seeing their possibilities rather than their weaknesses and their failures to understand. By His patient love our Lord made, out of rough fishermen, untutored and uncultured, such witnesses for the Kingdom that they "turned the world upside down." The leader should pray that His Spirit may brood over every group so that from it may come eager witnesses for Christ.

The use of the Bible and prayers. The Bible passages and the prayers should be selected with great care and used with reverence. If these are carefully selected and properly used, they help to create an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit can act. They should never be used simply because it is customary to open a group meeting with prayer or

Bible reading, but because they have a real relation to the subject to be discussed. The use of a Bible passage, as a summary of the discussion, has already been described. (See page 64.) The Bible passage, however, need not necessarily be read at the close of the session. A Bible passage may be used to open the meeting if such a passage has been selected with a view to introducing the discussion and appropriate Bible passages may also be read at certain points during the session.

The leader may find it useful to keep notebooks in which he collects prayers and Bible quotations as he finds them from time to time. These are then readily available for use in discussion groups. The leader may also write the prayers he uses, or adapt existing prayers to make them more appropriate for his use. Prayers may be written or selected by members of the group, and used at certain meetings or adopted as class prayers. This is an excellent exercise for groups of young people. The group may be encouraged to open or close the sessions with extemporaneous prayer if the leader feels that this will aid the reality of the petitions.

In using the prayers, the leader should always adopt a reverent posture whether kneeling or standing, and should read the prayers distinctly in a natural tone of voice. There is no good reason why the tones of one's voice or the pronunciation of words should be different when one is saying prayers than when one is talking to one's friends. If the leader feels self-conscious in reading or saying prayers aloud, he should try hard to overcome that feeling. A group quickly senses the self-consciousness of a leader and, under these circumstances, is apt to be

more conscious of the leader's embarrassment than of the words and spirit of the prayers.

III. *Mechanical Aids to Good Leading:*

There are certain mechanical aids for the leader of which he should make the best possible use. These may be listed as follows:

1. *The care of external comfort:*

a. The room in which the meeting is held should be of such a character as to lend itself to informal discussion. A discussion group held in a church cannot have the proper atmosphere of informality and animation. In case there is no parish house available, discussion groups should be held in private houses rather than in the church proper.

b. The room should be selected with reference to the size of the group. A leader cannot create the proper atmosphere if a large group is crowded into a small room, or a small group spread out in a large room.

c. The room chosen should be one in which quiet may be secured. A desirable atmosphere cannot be obtained while the organist is practising or a group of Boy Scouts is playing basket ball in the vicinity.

d. The room should be prepared for the meeting before the group begins to assemble. An unprepared room gives an impression of slackness and indifference which is difficult for a leader to dispel.

e. The ventilation and heating of the room are very important. People cannot think clearly when they are shut up for an hour in a badly ventilated room. Too much cold air makes people uncomfortable and restless, and too much warmth is conducive to slumber.

f. The lighting of the room should be given careful thought. Lights directly behind the leader, into which the group members must look, cause physical distress and therefore injure the atmosphere of the group. If lights are so arranged that the black-

board cannot be seen, both the leader and the group are very much handicapped.

g. Chairs should be arranged in an informal manner for a discussion group meeting. If there should be a large table in the room, they may be arranged around that; if there is no table, they may be arranged in semi-circles around the leader's table. Benches or straight rows of chairs should be avoided, as they prevent the informality necessary to a good class atmosphere.

h. The leader should be provided with a table large enough for his books and papers, a good blackboard, chalk and eraser.

2. *Clippings.* Every leader should collect clippings on the subject of the course from his general reading in newspapers, magazines, and books. If pertinent paragraphs cannot be cut out of reading material, they should be copied and filed so that they may be readily accessible when the course is led. Leaders may find it convenient to keep clippings in manila envelopes with a separate envelope for those bearing on the discussion of each group meeting, or in a special notebook reserved for the purpose. In whatever way they are kept, they should be ready for the leader to use without searching or delay. The force of clippings is lost while the leader searches frantically through masses of notes to find an appropriate one for the subject under discussion. Clippings should never be used simply because they are interesting, but only as they contribute to the interest of the whole session. Sometimes the place of clippings may be supplied by quotations from the textbook.

Some of the uses of clippings in group discussion may be listed as follows:

a. To illustrate a point. Sometimes an important point made in discussion may be very strikingly illustrated by the reading of an appropriate clipping.

b. To give authority to a statement. When opinions of group members differ on a certain point, the leader can quickly clear up the difficulty by reading a quotation from an authority on the subject under discussion.

c. To stop loquacious members. When one member of the group threatens to occupy the time of the entire session, the leader may read a clipping and at once take up the general discussion from that point. If the clipping embodies, in a few words, the idea which the talkative member was trying to express in many, it is very valuable.

d. To sum up a discussion. When the discussion has been very general and diverse, the leader may read a clipping bringing the point under discussion clearly before the minds of the group before proceeding to the next topic.

Clippings used in any of these four ways will give the leader's opinion in the words of other people without his giving it in his own, and so will prevent his being dogmatic, while at the same time permitting him to guide the discussion to sound conclusions.

While the use of clippings may be very valuable, their value may be greatly lessened or even nullified by *certain abuses*, chief among which may be listed the following:

a. The leader may use too many clippings to be effective. Clippings should be used to aid general discussion and should never be used in such abundance that they prevent or take the place of general discussion. A session made up of the reading of clippings defeats the purpose of the discussion group.

b. The leader should never use clippings simply because he has collected them and, therefore, wishes to make use of them. The leader may have a large collection of clippings which he never uses at all, or uses with one group and not with another. Whether the clipping is appropriate for use or not is dependent on the line which the discussion takes.

c. The leader should never use clippings, no matter how interesting they may be, unless they have a very vital relation to the discussion in hand. A clipping which is pointless is useless.

3. *Blackboard.* A blackboard is almost a necessity to the leader of a discussion group. That Americans are "eye-minded," is a well-known fact even if one judged from no other evidence than the multitude of advertising signboards, and the popularity of moving pictures. In a discussion group, the leader will find it of great value to list answers on the blackboard as they are given, and make the blackboard lists the basis for discussion and comparison. When a number of different answers are given, the group finds it difficult to remember them all. If the leader is required to repeat all the answers many times in order to use them for the progression of the argument, the interest of the group may be lost. These difficulties are obviously removed when a blackboard is used. The use of a blackboard also focuses attention. When a leader walks to a blackboard and picks up a piece of chalk, attention is at once secured by the element of curiosity. From the point of view of the discussion, *the blackboard has two chief uses*:

a. To present clearly before the group the data on which the argument is to be based. Lists made on the blackboard in the early part of the session may remain as a basis for the entire discussion. Comparative columns may be added as the argument

progresses, and thus, by the time the conclusion is reached, all the evidence for the formation of the conclusion is clearly before the eyes of the group.

b. To recapitulate and sum up. Even the most diverse discussion may be clearly summarized by the use of the blackboard; thus the definiteness of the impression made is very much aided.

Certain cautions must be observed in the use of the blackboard:

a. Blackboard work must never be used for its own beauty, but only because it provides a basis for discussion or summarizes conclusions. Every list on the blackboard must be of some use in the discussion.

b. Lists made on the blackboard in advance of the meeting weaken, rather than strengthen, the discussion. Blackboard work must be done during the meeting as the points are developed by members of the group. If the leader lists the conclusions for them on the blackboard in advance of the group meeting, he is doing their thinking for them and limiting discussion.

c. The leader should never apologize for bad writing or spelling. This distracts the attention at once from the discussion to the technique of the blackboard work.

d. If possible, the leader should do his own blackboard work. The presence of two persons in the front of the room divides the attention of the group. The leader should write as clearly as possible. Light lines in chalk are hard to see.

4. *Charts.* Charts have a great teaching value. They may be used:

a. To attract attention to vital points in the argument.

b. To emphasize facts and figures necessary for the discussion.

c. To make an appeal.

Homemade charts often serve the purpose of the leader better than the printed ones which are available. They need not be finished artistically, or be beautiful in themselves in order to be of value in teaching. Leaders making their own charts should remember these cautions:

a. Charts should be simple. One idea on a chart is sufficient. The group should not be obliged to study out a complicated arrangement.
b. Statements on charts should be short and to the point.
c. Charts should give a correct impression. The memory retains a false impression just as tenaciously as it does a true one. Truth should not be sacrificed to make the charts artistic and attractive.

Charts should not be used simply for the sake of using them, nor ordinarily should the walls be hung with charts before the meeting begins. They should rather be held up or tacked up by the leader when the moment arrives at which they will aid the progress of discussion, summarize a point, or illustrate a conclusion.

5. *Maps.* When the subject of the course is concerned with some field of missionary endeavor, much interest is added by the use of a map. A map of the world hung in front of a group helps the leader to give a world view. Maps used in group meetings should be large enough to be seen clearly. They may be used with success in discussion as affording data concerning location, size, physical characteristics, and relation to trade routes, etc. Such visible data often give a real understanding of internal conditions and international problems.

6. *The textbook.* If a textbook is used as the basis for a course, a copy should be in the hands of

every member of the group, so that they may use the book for reference during the discussion. The leader should remember, however, the caution already given, that he should be leading a course on a certain subject, and not merely teaching a textbook.

7. *Books for Supplementary Reading.* The leader will find it an aid if the group members will read other books in addition to the textbook. He should recommend books for outside reading which he has found interesting and which may be found in general libraries. If they are valuable enough to own, he should give the name of the publisher and the price, and recommend their purchase. He should also state very briefly what each book is, and recommend certain chapters as of special interest. The leader should also encourage the members to recommend books they have read. This often serves to break the ice in a formal group. The fact that the leader recommends a bibliography lends importance to the subject. Outside reading is valuable in connecting the discussions of the group with everyday life, and thus widening the horizon of the members' mental outlook. Much apathy toward the work of the Church is due to the fact that people see no relation between religious teaching and the business and political life of the day.

8. *Anecdotes.* Often an amusing anecdote illustrates a point perfectly. Caution must be observed, however, not to drag in a favorite story just because the leader enjoys telling it. Anecdotes must be used to further the discussion and not to amuse either the group or the leader.

9. *Poems.* Poetry is the most perfect form of expression of any idea. Very often poems may be used

to emphasize a point in a discussion group. Here is found crystallized the idea for the expression of which the group may have been groping. Poems thus used, however, should never be sentimental, or dragged in unless they are particularly valuable in illustrating or summarizing a point in the discussion.

10. *Notebooks.* The leader should make his own notebook by writing out his own course outlines. The main questions and the sub-questions to be used at group meetings should be clearly noted so that they can be easily seen at a glance. Notebooks should also contain notes in regard to illustrations which are to be used in the development of the course; also the Bible readings and prayers. A well prepared notebook is a great aid to the leader at the group meeting. The leader should not keep his eyes fastened on the pages of his notebook, but should be perfectly familiar with its contents.

11. *Printed Suggestions for Leaders.* Suggestions for leaders of group discussion are published in connection with many textbooks. They contain outlines of the courses, and include main questions, sub-questions, Bible readings and prayers, together with an indication of possible discussion. They are very comprehensive, and represent the maximum of what can be accomplished by any leader. No leader, however, should attempt to use every word in the printed Suggestions. If such a thing were possible, it would be highly undesirable because it would not only prevent originality, but, would create a deadening uniformity in group meetings all over the country.

As the course in the printed Suggestions is carefully planned, leaders should try to develop every

main idea suggested in them. Since the main questions represent these main ideas, they may be used by any leader, provided the aim for the course is not changed. He may however word these questions differently. The leader should form his own sub-questions and list them in his notebook. This, and not the printed Suggestions, should form the basis for each leader's course. No leader should use a copy of the printed Suggestions in a group-meeting, although he may have copied from it the main questions and such illustrations and sub-questions as he wishes to use in order to form his own course. No leader can use all the sub-questions of another leader's course, because sub-questions depend on:

a. The type of the leader's mind. Different types of minds necessarily approach the same ideas differently.

b. The rapidity with which a group follows the argument. With some groups, the leader will need more sub-questions; and with others, less.

c. The answers given by the group. Many sub-questions must be used at the meeting which cannot be prepared beforehand, for the leader cannot know in advance what answer the group is going to give. Any leader who attempts to use every word of the printed Suggestions, will find himself in great difficulty in case the members do not give the answers printed. If he tries to force certain answers, he will seriously injure the value of the discussion. If, however, any leader wishes to use the sub-questions printed in the Suggestions for Leaders (see discussion of sub-questions, page 49), this is entirely permissible, provided he enters them in his own notebook.

A leader should read carefully the *Foreword* of the printed Suggestions, as this contains the general in-

structions for the course; study the aim thoughtfully, considering what it entails on his part as a leader; study and think of the Bible readings recommended in connection with the aim; select other Bible readings and note them for possible use; study the prayers, and note others that may be substituted; and make his own notebook with a full outline of his own course. If the Suggestions for Leaders are used with originality in thought and development, they will really furnish the help they are intended to provide.

Mechanical aids for the leader are valuable only as they contribute to the carrying out of the purpose for which the discussion is to be conducted. The leader must always remember that he is working for the extension of the Kingdom of God, not for the demonstration of a method. All his efforts, therefore, should be directed toward reaching this aim. The leader must not be the slave of a method, allowing his individuality to be cramped and hampered by it; rather, he should strive to make the method his slave to aid him in gaining active, intelligent workers for the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRAINING OF LEADERS

UP TO this point, the discussion has been concerned with the technique of the preparation for, and the management of, a discussion group on a certain subject. Those who are leading normal classes for the purpose of training leaders, will need some additional suggestions. The problem of training leaders for discussion groups in the Church is difficult because practically all of the leaders are volunteers who are unable to take courses in methods of teaching under experts in a normal school of recognized standing. However, the volunteer leaders in the Church who have been school teachers and therefore have had training, make excellent leaders of discussion groups if they can be shown how to apply to Church teaching the methods with which they are already familiar.

Varieties of Normal Classes

Several kinds of normal classes are possible for training leaders in the Church even though short courses only may be given.

I. *The One-Day Demonstration Class.*

This type of class is made necessary by conditions in rural districts which make it impossible for leaders to be away from home over night, or to return to any

center, for a number of successive days. It is particularly valuable for leaders who have already had training in method but who need to see its application in relation to a certain subject before they lead their own parish groups.

In a normal class of this type, the leader meets the parish leaders of the district at some central place and leads a three session course just as though he were leading a regular parish group. If the leader follows the main questions of the printed "Suggestions for Leaders" while the members take notes which they afterward compare with their own copies of the printed "Suggestions" this type of class may be a real help to parish leaders. Since the time for training must necessarily be short, the printed "Suggestions" thus serve as a guide after the class is over. Members of such a normal class should study the printed "Suggestions" carefully before the class meets; during the class sessions they should join in the discussion and make observations and notes rather than follow the leader in the printed pages. If the time is sufficiently long, a discussion of method at the close of the last session should be included in this type of class. The normal class leader may use, as a basis for this, the *Foreword* of the printed "Suggestions."

Leaders from parishes within easy access to each other by train, trolley, or automobile, form a group for this type of normal class. One parish of the group invites the others to attend the class. In order that this may be an educational, rather than a social exercise, a simple box-luncheon is usually planned.

The time table, which should be adapted to the arrival and departure of trains, is as follows:

Session I 10:30 to 11:30
Session II 11:35 to 12:35
Recess for luncheon
Session III 1:20 to 2:30

This plan, with a change of time table, may also be used for evening groups, with a supper. In this case, there should be one session before and two after supper.

II. *The Two-Day Normal Class or Institute.*

This type of normal class is useful in districts where the members find it possible to plan to stay over night in one center for the two successive days of the institute, or where they live so near that they can return for all the sessions of the two days of training. Such a class should include four sessions of an hour and a half or two hours each. The time may be planned in one of several ways.

1. The leader may plan to give instruction in method at the beginning of each session, and follow that by a demonstration on the subject, thus:

	First Day
10:30 to 11:00	Instruction on the formation of the course and lesson outlines.
11:00 to 12:00	Session I of the course on Japan.
	Recess for Luncheon
1:00 to 1:30	Instruction on the formation of questions.
1:30 to 2:30	Session II of the course on Japan.
	Second Day
10:30 to 11:00	Instruction on Group Management.
11:00 to 12:00	Session III of the course on Japan.
	Recess for Luncheon
1:00 to 1:30	Instruction on aids to teaching.
1:30 to 2:30	Session IV of the course on Japan.

In classes of this type, the normal leader should condense the subject used for demonstration-leading (in this case Japan) so that it may be covered in four sessions. The time table may, of course, be adapted for afternoon and evening meetings instead of morning and afternoon.

2. The leader may spend the first day in instruction on method, and follow on the second day with the plan for the one-day demonstration class, thus:

First Day

10:00 to 11:00	Method—The course as a whole.
11:00 to 12:00	Method—The individual session.
	Recess for Luncheon
1:00 to 2:00	Method—The leader and his aids.
2:00 to 3:00	Method—How to use printed Suggestions for Leaders.

Second Day

The plan for a one day demonstration class should be followed. (See time table on page 96.)

The time table may be adapted for afternoon and evening meetings.

III. *The Normal Class of Five or Six Sessions Held During Succeeding Weeks.*

Educational leaders in cities or in centers with outlying districts easily accessible by train or trolley find normal classes of this type possible and of course highly desirable. Whenever such a normal class is possible, it should be held in preference to the shorter courses. It may be held in the daytime or in the evening as seems more convenient for the largest number of members. The details of this type of class are described under topic heading IV.

IV. *Normal Classes of Eight Successive Sessions at Summer Conferences.*

Summer conferences usually last for ten days or longer, thus giving the normal class leader an opportunity for at least eight sessions. All parish leaders should be urged to attend summer conferences where they may receive more detailed training for their work than can be given at the shorter normal classes.

Normal classes of Types III and IV should include three divisions of instruction in the order that follows:

1. Definite instruction in method.
2. Demonstration Leading.
3. Practice leading under criticism.

The amount of time spent on each one of these divisions depends on the number of sessions.

A plan found successful in a normal course of eight sessions is given here as follows:

Session I.	Instruction by the leader on the course as a whole.
Session II.	Instruction by the leader on the individual session.
Session III.	Instruction by the leader on class management.
Session IV.	Demonstration session led by the leader on a selected course.
Sessions V, VI and VII.	Practice-leading by the members of the group on succeeding sessions of the same course.
Session VIII.	To be used by the leader in summarizing method or in demonstration leading, according to the needs of individual groups.

The various divisions of this normal class may be described thus:

1. Instruction in method should precede any demonstration-leading, so that the members of the group may clearly understand the formation of the lesson outline, the formation and use of questions, and other points in the technique of class procedure. The leader should, during this instruction, call attention to the chief elements of good leading which, in the later sessions of the course, he is going to ask the members of the class to observe and put into practice. Without this definite instruction, there is danger that the value of the demonstration lesson will be lost, as the members of the class, while realizing that they are enjoying an interesting, well led session, may not know what produces that happy result. The purpose of a normal class is to train the members to lead classes in their turn. Even the best leader may fail to accomplish this result unless he is careful to explain the points in technique which make a good session possible for every leader. These points have been outlined in the previous chapters of this book.

2. Demonstration-leading must follow the instruction on method, so that the class may observe the technique in operation. Having had this instruction previously, the demonstration session is full of meaning. The class is prepared to watch the development of the argument and the handling of the group with a full understanding of the means by which the leader is guiding the discussion steadily to a conclusion. Interest is aroused in watching the leader handle difficult situations, and notes should be made which can be used later when similar situations arise in individual classes. Since this demonstration is intended

to show the members of the class how a parish group may be led, it should be as perfect a piece of work as the leader can make it. Time should be allowed, after the demonstration, for comment and questions. The leader should call attention to special difficulties arising from the individual response of the particular group, and to special points which deserve notice.

3. After instruction on the method and demonstration of the use of the method, have been given by the leader, the members of the class should, in their turn, practice the use of the method under the leader's criticism. The first hour of the session on practice in leading should be given over to a single member or a group of members, who should conduct it just as though it were a parish discussion group. At the close of the hour, the leader should criticize the work, reserving at least fifteen minutes for this criticism. Leading, under criticism, is a painful exercise for most members of normal classes; but it is an extremely salutary one. So much of the success of group discussion depends on the ability of the leader to use the answers given at the meeting, and to manage the human personalities that make up the group, that practice on his part is absolutely necessary. Of course, a leader may gain this practice in his own parish classes, and much of it must necessarily be gained there; yet he should have practice in leading as a regular part of any normal class of sufficient length to permit this, and should seek, from the criticism he receives, to strengthen the good points and to correct the errors in his leading. In a well taught normal class, those who are doing the practice-leading become perfectly able to criticize themselves, such is their understanding of the method.

This ability for self-criticism will of course help them to improve their own leading constantly with each group they conduct. Good leading requires constant growth.

General Rules of Good Criticism

In criticizing practice-leading, the normal class leader must keep in mind the following important points:

1. The function of a critic is to give advice and direction of such a kind that the members of the class will waste the least possible amount of time in becoming skilled leaders themselves. Mistakes which would injure such ability should be pointed out, and the method of correction suggested. Criticism of leading is not a form to be gone through with, but a definite attempt to aid in the development of leaders.

2. The normal class leader should keep himself in touch with the difficulties of parish leaders by leading at least one complete parish class a year. The value of criticism in normal classes is greatly increased by such close contact with situations arising out of parish groups.

3. The leader of normal classes should be sure not to discourage the members of his classes. He must judiciously combine encouragement with criticism, pointing out the good points of the session as well as the bad. With most prospective leaders in the Church, more emphasis may safely be placed by the critic on the good points than on the bad, as such leaders may be depended upon to develop the good by their own efforts and thereby gradually to eliminate the bad. The practice-leader who misunderstands such criticism, and becomes so cocksure in

consequence that he destroys his ability to lead, is the exception.

4. The leader of normal classes must be sure to guard the individuality of class members. While criticism is intended to be a helpful guide, it should never aim to create a uniformity of treatment of any subject. Certain points must be observed in good leading; but, aside from these few simple rules, the personality of the leader must be allowed full liberty of expression.

5. A good critic must be friendly and not dictatorial, and must be quite obviously just and practical in his suggestions.

6. The critic must hold up, as desirable, strong ideals as well as practical skill. He should never give the impression that the method is more important than the result.

7. The critic must be original and fertile in illustrations so that the points in his criticism may be clearly understood.

8. Every leader of normal classes should work out each year as a matter of original work a full course on some subject without the aid of the printed "Suggestions for Leaders." This practice will broaden his knowledge both of subject and of method and will make him a better critic.

9. A definite outline of points to be watched in criticism will be found helpful to the normal class leader. The following is suggested:

GUIDE FOR CRITICISM OF PRACTICE-LEADING IN A DISCUSSION GROUP

I. *Management of Lesson*

1. Evidence of preparation (construction of lesson outline).

2. Knowledge of subject matter (Familiarity with textbook, etc.).
3. Definiteness of aim.
4. Skill in using discussion method.
   Note: a. Good questioning.
   b. Logical progression of thought.
   c. Success in reaching conclusions.
5. Use of collateral material (Clippings, charts, etc.).

II. *Management of Class*

1. Participation and interest of class.
2. Management of time.
3. Attitude toward class.
   a. Is the leader courteous, tactful and sympathetic?
   b. Does the leader intrude personality?
   c. Does the leader force personal opinion?
   d. Is the leader fair-minded?
   e. Is the leader's aim high enough?

III. *Blackboard Work*

IV. *Giving of Assignment*

V. *Management of Review*

VI. *Special Criticism*

General Suggestions for the Leader of Normal Classes

Some general suggestions for leaders who are planning normal courses may be of value, in addition to the special recommendations for those who act as critics in practice-leading sessions. Some of the most important may be listed thus:

1. The time for a normal class should not be less than an hour and a quarter. This amount of time is necessary, in order that there may be discussion and criticism following the demonstration and practice-leading.

2. Members of normal classes at summer conferences should be urged to enroll in at least one other class which is conducted by the discussion method, in order that they may see the method fully demonstrated. In an eight session course, there is time for only one demonstration session or possibly two. Members of normal classes should supplement this class by observation of the discussion method at another class. The selection of the subject of this supplementary class will be determined by the individual interests of the class members. Social service leaders, for instance, may enter the normal class for instruction and practice in the discussion method, and follow this by attendance at a class in some subject relating to social service which is led by discussion; leaders in missions will go from the normal class into mission study classes; other may go into Bible classes, etc.

3. The leader of a normal class should keep the last session of the course in his own hands, and should not allow practice-leading to occupy it. The last session of every course should be definitely helpful, sending the members away with a real enthusiasm, and with a desire to serve God in the educational work of the Church. That this impression cannot be made by an exhibit of practice-leading with criticism, is evident.

4. The leader of a normal class should assign work to be done outside of the class and brought in for criticism. After the instruction received in class, members of such classes should work out lesson outlines, with the lines of argument, and questions and sub-questions, so that they may be able to plan a course on any subject at any time. This homework

is a necessary supplement to the instruction given in class, and makes it of real value.

5. The leader of a normal class should prepare beforehand the entire course which is to be used for the sessions on demonstration and practice in leading, so that he may be able to give real help to the class in preparing their assignments.

The leader should meet with each group before their practice-leading session and go over their assignment with them carefully, making it as perfect as possible. For inexperienced leaders, it has been found valuable in practice-leading sessions to use assignments which have been prepared by the leader. To allow a class to do practice-leading from an assignment which is not workable, is unfair to them; nor is valuable criticism possible under such circumstances.

6. The leader of normal classes should recommend books on method, to be studied after the normal class is over.

7. The leader of normal classes should advise the members to visit good schools, in order to observe modern methods of teaching.

8. The leader of normal classes should advise the members to attend normal classes at universities and normal schools, whenever possible. Many of the leaders of groups in the Church, live near enough to institutions devoted to the training of teachers, to attend classes; and would be interested in doing so, if this were suggested to them.

9. The leader of normal classes should recommend to parishes and to district or diocesan institutes and summer conferences such members as show outstanding ability as leaders. He should keep readily available lists of possible leaders, in case he should be

asked for a recommendation. Recommendations of good leaders should be made to diocesan officers without special request so that their ability may be made use of in the Church. To hesitate to recommend a good leader for fear that one's own glory may be diminished thereby, is unworthy of a normal class leader.

However, the leader of normal classes must not be discouraged if leaders develop from his classes slowly. The training for leadership must necessarily be difficult work. Every normal class leader should recognize that while with patience and sympathetic training, he can develop *good* leaders, only God himself can make *great* leaders.

To Him may all leaders of discussion groups in the Church, dedicate their work!

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